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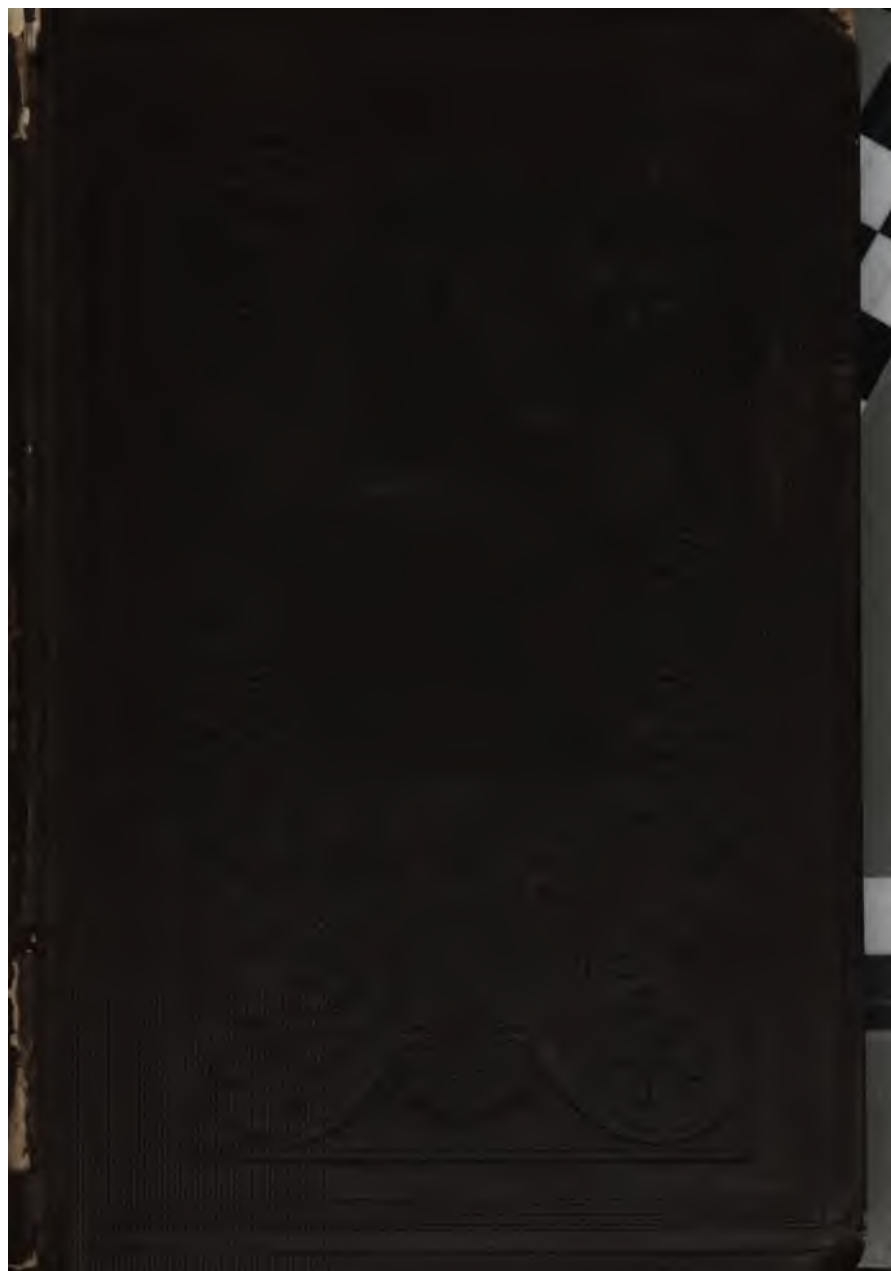
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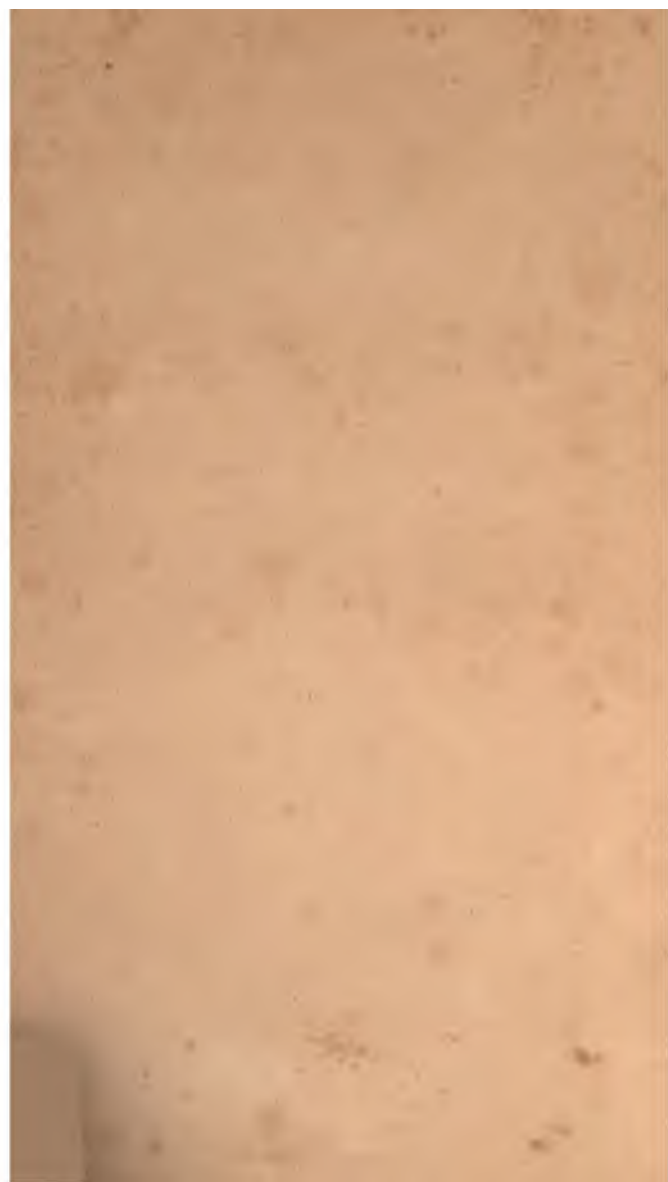


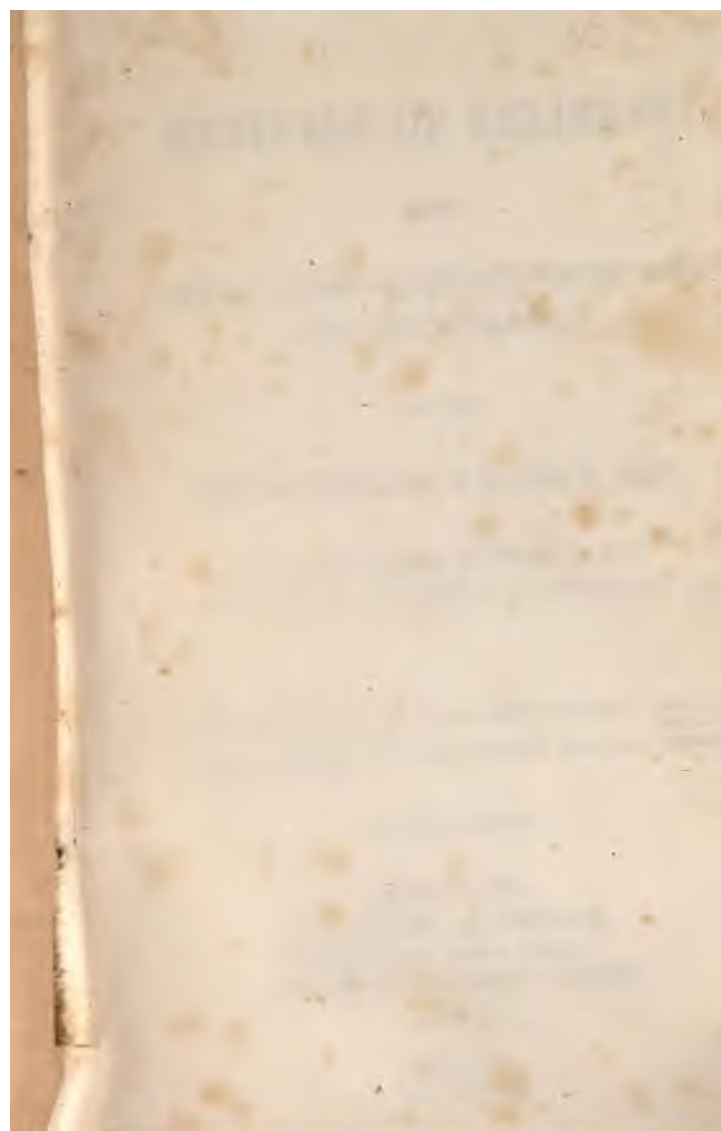
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REVIVALS OF RELIGION:

THEIR

THEORY, MEANS, OBSTRUCTIONS, USES
AND IMPORTANCE;

WITH THE

DUTY OF CHRISTIANS IN REGARD TO THEM.

By REV. JAMES PORTER, A. M.

AUTHOR OF "THE TRUE EVANGELIST."

"Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?"—
DAVID.

"And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand
souls."—LUKE.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:

CHARLES H. PEIRCE.

NEW YORK: LANE & SCOTT.

CINCINNATI: SWORMSTEDT & POWER.

1849.

clm

BV2790

P65

1849

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1848,

By JAMES PORTER,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of
Massachusetts.

Stereotyped and Printed by G. C. Rand & Co.,
No. 3, Cornhill, Boston.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

REVIVALS of Religion are of the highest importance, involving spiritual interests for time and eternity. The greatest force of argument, is hardly sufficient to do them justice, and secure the attention they deserve. They need to be discussed in every rank and condition of society, that the scattered light of experience and observation may be collected to a focus, and made effective in arousing the friends of God to suitable action. But nearly all the works upon the subject, now in circulation, are from the same general source, and are based and executed in subordination to a system of theological technicalities, for which many have little sympathy. While they contain much that is excellent, they err in attributing to God what properly belongs to man. With this, some of them advocate other errors scarcely less dangerous. Their generic cognomen is, "*New Divinity*." Unlike the system just named, it attributes almost every thing to man. He has "*natural ability*," it is said, to repent, to convert himself, to change his own heart, to love God, &c. Thus the two extremes meet, and figure in the same volume. Yet, notwithstanding this hypothetical jangling, truth and light are seen flashing in every direction. But they are so intermingled with these conflicting errors, they fail of the gracious influence that might otherwise be exerted. There are corresponding defects also, in regard

to *means*; the one class, urging those which are quite too feminine; the other, imposing burdens "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." It follows, therefore, that a suitable work for general circulation among the people, is a desideratum in religious literature.

The object of the present volume is, to meet the necessity here indicated. How far it does so, is for others to decide. We have written as we preach, for the "common people," and not for the fastidious and critical. If our humble suggestions shall prove useful in bringing them to a better knowledge of duty, and more efficiency in promoting the work of God, our highest ambition will be gratified.

The physical adaptation of the work is worthy of notice. The books named are comparatively large. Some Christians would hardly have courage to grapple them, who might be induced to read one of less dimensions. They are also expensive beyond the capacity of many to purchase. Here, too, we have aimed to choose the better course.

In conclusion, it remains to make our acknowledgments to Almighty God for the interest we have been enabled to feel in the revival of his work, and for the privilege of making this little effort in its behalf. We acknowledge our indebtedness, also, to the great and good men, to whose writings we have alluded, for many valuable suggestions. Though we do not acquiesce in all their views, we have perused their works with profound respect and veneration. May the great Head of the church accompany these pages with his blessing, and make them subservient to the object for which they are sent forth to the world.

THE AUTHOR.

Cabotville, September 26, 1848.

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REVIVALS OF RELIGION.



CHAPTER I.

RELIGION—ITS NATURE AND MANIFESTATIONS.

BEFORE speaking of a *revival* of religion, it is important to consider religion itself. If we do not understand the *nature* of it, how can we judge of its revival, or the means necessary thereto? Ignorance here is the prolific source of many errors into which honest men have fallen. Starting with wrong premises, they have naturally arrived at wrong conclusions. The more logical the reasoning, with such an outset, the more surely will it conduct to erroneous results.

We will first, then, inquire in what true religion consists. And this must be done with some degree of particularity, since no general definition will answer our purpose. We need to know *precisely* what constitutes the genuine Christian, to estimate the various states of approximation to, or retro-

gression from that character. It is also necessary to sound judgment in relation to prudential measures, either for the acquisition, or revival of it. Let us inquire, therefore,

First, Into the character and condition of man, as presented in the scriptures, and the various relations of life, without religion. This is important for two reasons, viz., that we may understand the great change of heart, life, and relations, which religion involves, and attribute the work to its proper origin.

The first notice we have of man, is contained in the divine proposition to make him. "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." And it immediately follows, — "So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." This evidently refers to his moral image, and plainly indicates that man was made intelligent and holy, capable of knowing, doing, and enjoying the will of his Maker. We believe this to be the commonly received view of the subject, and it is fully supported both by reason and scripture.

It was not long, however, before the glory of this first exhibition was tarnished. The same inspired record states, that man sinned, and was ejected from his delightful abode, to till the ground, and obtain bread by the sweat of his brow. Every

notice of him since then, aside from the grace of God, is directly antipodal to the first, showing the consequences of sin upon himself and upon his progeny, as the product of a corrupt stock. Originally, he was *immortal*, *now*, mortal — *then*, in delightful communion and acceptance with God ; now, rejected and at enmity with him — *then*, holy, just, and good ; now, wicked and perverse — *then*, justified, but now condemned.

The corruption imbibed by the first pair, seems to have been transmitted by natural generation, to their descendants. Says the Psalmist, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "The wicked are estranged from the womb ; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." St. Paul declares, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." And St. John, looking at the same general fact, writes, "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." According to the epistle to the Ephesians, men in their unrenewed state, are "dead in trespasses and sins, walking

according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, having their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and are children of wrath."

And do not history and observation harmonize with these representations? The propensity of the human heart to sin, is every where seen, though not always attributed to the same cause. But the cause is not under consideration now. The fact admitted, the inference is unavoidable, that the heart, in which this propensity exists, and from which streams of corruption are seen to issue, is disordered. Every unregenerate man knows his heart is not right with God, by its tastes and aversions; for it rejects Him, and cleaves to low, selfish, carnal, and worthless gratifications.

This being the condition of men — corrupt in heart and disobedient in life, two things are necessary for them to meet God in peace, viz., the pardon of their sins and the renewal of their souls. This two-fold work is indicated in the bible no less than in the nature of the case. The following announcements are directly in point: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to *forgive* us our sins, and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness." — 1 *John*, 1: 9. "But ye are *washed*, but ye

are *sanctified*, but ye are *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.—1 Cor. 6: 11.

In speaking, therefore, of the nature of religion, we are prepared to say,

1. *That it implies the pardon of all sin.* Sin, is the transgression of the law. It may be either positive or negative — doing or being what the law forbids, or neglecting to do or be, what it requires. Every transgressor is under the curse of the law, condemned and exposed to its penalty. Pardon, is that act of God by which he cancels the claims of the law against the sinner, and exempts him from the punishment he deserves. Thus, its effect is to change the relation of the sinner to the law, from that of a condemned criminal, liable to execution, to that of a pardoned sinner, who enjoys the protection of the Lawgiver, as though he had not sinned. It does not exempt him from his *obligation* to keep the law, nor does it impose any obligation on the Lawgiver to forgive him in case of another departure, nor indicate that he will do so. It is so far from involving the nature of an indulgence to sin, it will render another transgression more sinful than it otherwise would be, since it lays the sinner under additional obligation to obey.

Now, as sin is the transgression of the law, and all have sinned, no one is in a state of acceptance with God, and security against the retributions of justice, until he is pardoned, however moral and correct his general deportment. Obedience in one instance, or in a thousand, if we had it to plead, has no value, to cancel disobedience in other instances. For though we were to be perfectly loyal to the hour of our exit, it would only be doing our duty, and could not atone for a single fault. Pardon, therefore, is our only resort, to evade the penalty of the law; and till this is secured, we are in our sins, exposed to everlasting destruction. With this sealed to our hearts, we are in a state of favor with God, notwithstanding past sins, and present unworthiness; and if we do not relapse into folly, shall be accepted of him in the day of his coming.

This accounts for the prominence given to pardon in the holy scriptures, the language of which is explicit. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly *pardon*." "Blessed is the man whose transgression is *forgiven*, and whose sin is covered." "I have *blotted out* as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as

a cloud thy sins." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be *forgiven* unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." Moses prayed, "This people have sinned a great sin. Yet now, if thou wilt, *forgive* their sin; if not, blot me out of thy book which thou hast written." Jesus said, "Father *forgive* them; for they know not what they do." And Peter exhorted Simon Magus, "Repent, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be *forgiven* thee." Indeed, the scriptures are full of the subject, though it is so little considered by many who profess to follow them.

We have said, pardon is an act of God. It follows, therefore, that it takes place at some *specific time*. Agreeably to this, real Christians are generally able to advert to the period, (perhaps not to the minute, or even day,) when it occurred. They know *about* the time. But it is not so with others. Unfortunately for many, their religion is without date or place. They cannot, like Paul, or Peter, or the jailer, or the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, speak of the wonderful work whereby they were "*justified*, and had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." By this circumstance false professors may generally be detected.

2. *True religion implies the regeneration of the heart.* We said of pardon, that it changes our relation to the law—exculpating us from its threatened penalty. This is the effect of it, simply considered as a forensic term. But who does not see that the sinner merely pardoned, and left with his carnal dispositions and affections, would be precisely the same in spirit as before? The favor of God, in bestowing so great a blessing, would not be likely to improve his character much. For, “the carnal mind is at enmity against God, it is not subject to his law neither indeed can be.” He would probably pursue the same course of rebellion as before, and fall at once into condemnation.

But should he not—should he ever after live in outward obedience, it would not suffice for his salvation. Heaven is a holy place. The *employment* of heaven is holy, as is every emotion that swells its songs. But the sinner, only pardoned, (if we may suppose such a condition,) is carnal, at enmity with God; he has no love for him, or his service, and, hence, is unfit for heaven. Hence the necessity of regeneration. This changes the heart, and affections. “Old things, [his sinful propensities, and distaste for religious interests,] are passed away; behold, all things have become new.”—2 Cor. 5: 17. The things he hated be-

fore he now loves, and the things which he loved he now hates. The greatness of the change is strikingly manifest in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus — the Phillippian jailer, and others, whose piety is attested by the holy scriptures. It is as much a matter of personal experience with every true Christian, as joy or sorrow, hunger or thirst. He has the same proof of it, he had of guilt and condemnation as a sinner. But more of this in another place.

We remark further, it is generally *instantaneous* in its accomplishment. Going in connection with pardon, which, from the nature of the case must be instantaneous, it is fair to infer, that this is so too. The representations of scripture also favor the idea. It is therein described as the new birth, being “born from above,” “born of the Spirit and of water”—being “quickened,”—raised from the dead, &c. Christian experience also confirms this opinion.

We add, too, that it may be either partial or complete. It is the will of God, we have no doubt, that it should be complete, perfectly cleansing the whole heart from every stain; and in himself considered, he is infinitely able to effect it. But for wise reasons he made its bestowment, in every degree, conditional; and therefore, gradu-

ates his operations in effecting it, as the condition is performed. Faith in Christ being the condition, the work is partial or complete according to the comprehensiveness and strength of faith in the subject. If in his intelligence, he embraces the divine provision against all sin, and his own entire dependence upon it for salvation; and by faith appropriates it to himself as an ample remedy for the guilt, power, and existence of all impurity, the work will be complete at once, and God will be more glorified than if it were partially done. But this, we apprehend, is not generally the case. The views of the repenting sinner are contracted, and his confidence in God feeble. He neither anticipates much it is the divine will to bestow, or believes with a confidence necessary to receive it. He is, therefore, but partially regenerated. But this a great work. It changes the whole tendency of his mind, and establishes the kingdom of God within him, "in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

These views, we believe, are scriptural. The Psalmist pronounced him blessed "whose transgression is *forgiven*," but this was not all he deemed necessary. Hence he prayed, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin." "Wash thou me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "Cleanse thou me from secret

faults." And Jesus, who knew our necessities better than any man, asserts, "Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." "It is the spirit that quickeneth." Says St. Paul, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." "God, according to his mercy, saved us, by the *washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*" Is not this enough? Were it in place, we might multiply passages showing this to be the essential element in the religion of the bible.

3. Another particular to be named in this connection is, *the attestation which God gives to the believing soul that the work is effected.* The pardon of the sinner being a divine act, is a secret with God until he reveals it. And so is regeneration, except so far as it may be indicated by its fruits. To give the believing sinner, therefore, the

earliest and clearest assurance of acceptance with God and adoption into his spiritual family, the Holy Spirit is employed to witness the fact to his heart. That is, to make such an impression upon his mind as shall convince him that the work is done. Of the *mode* of the Spirit's operations we are ignorant. But we know the fact, that it does operate. It convinces the sinner "of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come." It alarms his fears and stimulates him to cry for mercy. The impression that he is a sinner exposed to ruin, is convincing. He has not a doubt remaining, whatever may have been his previous opinions; and he cries out under the discovery, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Now when he has reached the point of entire submission, and God has forgiven and accepted him, the Spirit impresses this fact upon his mind with as much distinctness and force, as it did before, the fact, that he was a condemned sinner. His alarm at once ceases; love and joy spring up in his heart, and he instinctively exclaims, "Abba Father."

This is according to the teachings of the great apostle, who says, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, (which every awakened sinner has;) but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father." "The

spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Again, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might *know* the things that are freely given us of God." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying Abba Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." The language of his heart is, therefore,

"My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear,
He owns me for his child,
I can no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And Father, Abba Father, cry."

Now, though this is not the great change which constitutes religion, it has much to do with it. It is the divine mode of communicating the fact to the believer, of such a change having been effected, without the knowledge of which, he could neither be happy or useful. And it is satisfactory. God is to be credited when he attests to pardon as when he admonishes of guilt. And to doubt the testimony of his Spirit, corroborated by collat-

eral evidence, such as ever accompanies it, is no sign of humility ; and serves to endanger, rather than ensure salvation.

But it may be asked whether there is not danger of mistaking other influences for those of the Spirit, or of mistaking the *language* of the Spirit ? To this we reply, not if we properly attend to the corroborative evidence before named. If we have been convinced of sin — have endeavored to forsake it, and do that which is right — have earnestly prayed and otherwise sought pardon according to our best knowledge and ability ; and now feel “ love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and patience,” in some good degree ; and have love for the people of God, his word and worship, there is no danger. These are the legitimate fruits of the new birth, and can spring from no other source. We may be assured that we have “ passed from death unto life.”

Among the first emotions of one thus converted will be gratitude to God for his merciful forbearance and awakening grace. The thought of past sins, the resistance of the Spirit, and the abuse of the means of grace, in connection with present circumstances, often thrills the soul with indescribable emotion. It spontaneously exclaims, “ O, the

mercy of God ! How astonishing ! What a wonder I was not cut off in my sins and consigned to hell ! But Jesus is my Savior ! ”

“ He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the pris’ner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean ;
His blood availed for me ! ”

“ O for a thousand tongues to sing,
My great Redeemer’s praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace ! ”

One thus elated with gratitude naturally feels corresponding *love* to his benefactor. God now becomes the supreme object of his thoughts and affections. His heart flows out towards him with filial ardor, while he exclaims,

“ Joyful in hope, my spirit soars
To meet thee from above,
Thy goodness thankfully adores ;
And sure I taste thy love ! ”

He sees attractions now in the people of God he never saw before. Formerly he sought after company more congenial to his taste — company in which God was not named but in levity, or perhaps in derision. But how changed ! His affinities now incline him to the companionship of Christians. He loves their spirit, conversation, devotion ; their object of pursuit, their God ; and

feels that he is allied to them by a common pater-nity. The attachment is divine. It is not the product of consanguinity, long association, or acquaintance. He has only known them, perhaps, to hate and persecute them. But a revolution has taken place. In a *moment* his eyes have been opened, and the current of his affections changed and purified. He sees beauty in holiness, and loves the image of God as exhibited in his people, of whatever nation, rank, or condition.

A similar transition occurs, also, in regard to the bible. Though the most important of all books, the impenitent read it with the least interest. For the reason, probably, that it disturbs their consciences and excites their fears. Refusing to receive and improve it as a message of mercy, it becomes their death warrant, and rings in their ears the terrible retributions of eternity. But now they have submitted to its requirements and obtained assurances of adoption into the divine family, it becomes the charter of their privileges, the map and guarantee of their heavenly inheritance. Thus said the Psalmist, "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy testimonies at all times."

The house of God also presents strong attrac-

tions. Though it may have been seldom visited, and then with reluctance; by the change under consideration, it becomes a delightful resort. The worship of God is a precious recreation. The Sabbath, once a weary day, is now a "delight." And thus we might remark of all the means of grace. However insipid before, they are glorious now. The tendencies of the mind are changed. Formerly they inclined to temporal things, now to spiritual; then to the earth, now to heaven.

From this hasty glance it may be seen in what vital religion consists, and the phenomena by which it is distinguished. Its progress, unless interrupted by unfaithfulness, will be characterized by willing and cheerful obedience, and an increase of the fruits of the Spirit even to the perfect day. But by sinful indulgence, or the neglect of known duties, these fruits will be blighted and disappear; and the soul return again to guilt and corruption, so that its last state will be worse than the first. To suppose we are justified when we have fallen back into the love of sin, merely because we were once assured of conversion, is a great mistake. Men are not Christians till they are pardoned and renewed, and they cease to be such when they cease to have the fruits of the Spirit.

It will be seen, too, in what light those are to be regarded, *who make religion to consist in mere morality*, or the discharge of the social duties which belong to the relations of civil society. It is not uncharitable to say they have no part or lot in the matter. Their religion is confined to this world. Its principles, motives, and ends are all good, it may be, but they are not sufficiently high to reach our obligations to God, nor sufficiently broad to compass our spiritual relations to him. It looks more to social than to religious interests; and is occupied with time to the neglect of eternity. It is more frequent in its references to nature than to nature's God, and especially to his Son Jesus Christ; and glorifies man more than his Maker. The new birth it regards as a delusion, and revivals as mere excitements.

If we add religious observances, in which there is no pardon or regeneration involved, still it is wanting. The Scribes and Pharisees were more abundant in these — they fasted and prayed, and paid tithes, and filled the temple with their incense; and yet the Savior declares, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in *no case* enter into the kingdom of heaven." God looks at the

heart, and while he enjoins many ceremonial duties, he also requires that we "be converted and become like little children."

We see, too, the error of those who make religion to be the work of *man* alone. A distinguished writer on revivals proceeds through his whole book upon this groundless assumption. Speaking of the conversion of the sinner, he says, "it consists in his *obeying* the truth;" whereas, obedience is rather a fruit of conversion than conversion-itself. He asks, "What is regeneration?" and replies, "It is the first act of genuine *obedience* to God." Of course it is man's work, and not God's. How absurd! Man born again by his own act! In the same lecture he asserts, "It is ridiculous to say that a sinner is passive in regeneration, or passive in being converted, for conversion is *his own act*. The thing to be done is that which cannot be done for him. It is something which *he must do*, or it will never be done." He accordingly objects to the sinner's praying for a new heart, and urges him to love God, and thus change his own heart.

Now, while we admit the sinner is not passive in regeneration, nothing can be farther from the truth than this view of the subject. It is not only unscriptural, but contrary to reason and philosophy. The bible attributes the work to the Holy Spirit,

as the efficient agent in its accomplishment. In this the great mass of evangelical Christians, commentators, and theologians, are agreed. And such are the nature and magnitude of the work, and such the constitution of the human mind in its lapsed estate, to attribute it to a less cause is unreasonable. He who made the mind in his own image, is alone able to restore that image. The sinner, "*dead* in trespasses," under the power of the carnal mind and averse to all holiness, certainly cannot do it. It is philosophically impossible. Besides, the new birth implying the forgiveness of sins, which is the exclusive prerogative of God, the sinner can no more renew his own heart than he can dethrone his Maker.

We are the more surprised at this singular sentiment when we consider the source from whence it comes. Calvinists have generally guarded this point with great care. They have been exceedingly jealous of their Arminian brethren, lest they should allow the sinner such an agency in his own conversion, as to detract from the divine glory. Indeed, they have denied him any available action, and all *power* of action. According to their theory, the first thing in the order of grace next to election, is regeneration by the sovereign power of God. Then follow conviction of sin, repentance,

prayer, &c., as the natural results of this special work. But now we are told by a respectable portion of this same body, headed by men of profound learning and talents, that here is a gross mistake — that man has power, and is required to regenerate himself. And what is most singular of all, is, that he has this power by *nature* and not by *grace*. Blind however he may be, he may open his eyes and see ! Though dead and buried in sin, he may *arise* ! From the "*horrible pit and miry clay*," he may leap upon the rock and take up the new song, even praise to God. How unreasonable ! We believe nothing can be farther from the truth, and it affords no mitigation to the absurdities of the system it is designed to relieve.

This subject suggests also the *relative* importance of the new birth, and the gospel which aims to extend it. Other reforms strike at a *single* sin ; this at *all* sin. Those, if they succeed, but *partially* reform ; this *completely*. Those aim at the *habits* ; this at the *heart*. Those reform for earth ; this for heaven. The true Christian directs his efforts at the *root* of the tree ; other reformers at the *branches*. The work of the latter is important and may have the divine sanction ; that of the former is vastly more so. The one, if he succeeds, leaves reform but just commenced ;

the other completes it. If the former purifies the *single stream* to which he devotes himself, he is satisfied; the latter cleanses the *fountain* from which all the streams flow. Those, therefore, who neglect the work of converting the sinner to God to prosecute a single branch of reform, should be careful not to reproach others whose aim is more benevolent and Godlike than their own.

These remarks will be appreciated by those who have observed the operations of reform for the last ten years, and are sufficient for our present purpose.

CHAPTER II.

RELIGION—ITS CONDITIONALITY, OR THE MEANS NECESSARY TO ITS ATTAINMENT.

IN the preceding chapter we have spoken of religion as a matter of personal experience. We have seen the sinner awakened, pardoned, renewed, and assured of his adoption; and have traced the whole to the operations of the Holy Spirit. Yet, we have carefully guarded against the idea that the sinner has no agency in the work. The same record which attributes pardon and regeneration to God, teaches that he performs these gracious works only under certain circumstances, and on certain conditions, which are dependent on man for their existence. The agency of the sinner, therefore, is as necessary to his salvation as that of God. God has determined what he *will* do, and what the sinner *must* do; and he will no sooner do the sinner's work than he will require the sinner to do his work.

These separate agencies are intimately con-

nected yet perfectly distinct. They co-operate with admirable harmony in the sinner's conversion ; for the sinner cannot save himself without God, and God will not save him without his co-operation. This principle lies at the foundation of the divine government, and is everywhere recognized in the system of salvation. It also commends itself to our judgment, and acquits the divine administration where other systems involve it in much perplexity.

Our present object is to consider more particularly the agency of the sinner in his own salvation. It is certain he cannot renovate his heart. Yet he is required to do something necessary to it. Regarding him, therefore, a believer in the bible as a revelation from God, and every man is, or ought to be, we say,

1. *It is his duty to repent.* This is plain. We have the same evidence of it we have of any duty. To multiply proof-texts is scarcely necessary. The Old Testament abounds in them, and Christ and the apostles made it a leading topic in their ministrations. John, called and commissioned from heaven, went forth preaching it, baptizing all who gave proof of its proper exercise. The Savior soon followed him, preaching the same, declaring, "I came to call *sinners* to repentance." The

twelve apostles being sent forth, "preached that men should *repent*." Paul taught, "testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, *repentance toward God*." Jesus pronounced a terrible woe against Chorazin and Bethsaida, because they *repented not*; and he complained of the Jews that they neglected to repent, while publicans and harlots believed and entered into his kingdom.

That repentance is necessary to pardon and regeneration is equally obvious. Peter, addressing the multitude of all nations on the day of Pentecost, said, "*Repent* and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the *remission of sins*, and ye shall *receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*." Here we have the whole work of pardon and renewal by the Holy Ghost, promised to repentance. Afterward, the same apostle exhorted, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." The same sentiment is involved in the words of the prophet, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly *pardon*." These are encouragements given to the *sinner* to repent. Not to one who is renewed by the Holy Spirit, and now bears his image. The duty is urged on *sinners* —

not as the *proof* of religion but the *condition* of it. The *wicked* man is to forsake his way and then be pardoned ; not be pardoned first and then forsake. The blind man who will have his eyes opened, must pray *first*, even though he never saw Jesus, and cannot see him ; not see first and then pray. Those who make conversion prior to repentance, in the order of time, or as the cause, and repentance the effect, misrepresent the scriptures and tranquillize the sinner's conscience in a dangerous manner. The idea of the sinner's having "*natural ability*" to repent, or even to convert himself, does not help the case. If such ability exists, it is agreed on all hands, it never was exercised and never will be, because it is identified with a moral inability, (otherwise natural depravity,) which operates with the force of an unalterable decree, to keep the sinner from repentance. But there is no such ability that can have effect in the case, and no intimation of any, except in the theological speculations of men. God has neither exhorted us to improve it, nor threatened us for neglecting it. The plan of salvation is a moral and *gracious* plan, the terms of it are *gracious*, and the ability to comply with them ; and it is the same in regard to all persons. But we will not dwell here. Perhaps we shall have occasion to refer to the subject in another place.

Of the *nature* of repentance it may be remarked, the word denotes an after-thought, or the soul re-collecting its own actions in such a manner as to produce sorrow and desire of amendment. Mr. Wesley defines it, "Conviction of sin, producing real desires and sincere resolutions of amendment." We understand it to mean conviction of sin, that we have voluntarily and wilfully disobeyed God,—for which he is justly displeased with us, and may cast us off forever; and a sincere purpose and faithful endeavor to forsake sin and do that which is right. To know that we are sinners is not repentance, nor to be afraid that sin will prove our ruin. These states of mind are common and often transient. They properly belong to repentance and cannot be dispensed with in that duty, but standing alone they profit us nothing. There must be the firm resolve and the faithful effort; otherwise the "fruits meet for repentance," or the work will be radically defective. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord," saith the prophet. The language of Christ is, "Take my *yoke* upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Sincere repentance implies *reflection*. It may be more or less intense, according to circumstances.

It also implies *emotion*, which is graduated by the degree of conviction and the excitability of the subject. All persons are not susceptible of the same degree, nor do all need it. There is no more virtue in deep emotion than in clear perception, and the object of both is the same, viz., prompt and obedient *action*. God does not require that we *feel* deeply, but that we *break off* our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by turning to him. Our emotions and affections are not always voluntary, our *actions* are. The Lord saw the "*works*" of the Ninevites, "that they *turned from their evil way* : and he repented him of the evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not."

This point cannot be made too clear. No sooner do sinners begin to repent, than they are distressed because they have no more "*feeling*." And this mistake is often encouraged by the prayers and instructions of Christians. In this way many have become disheartened, and given up effort. Had they been taught that repentance consists more in *action* than emotion, they would have succeeded. We have seen sinners in great distress, whose repentance was ineffectual, while others with little emotion, acting more on principle, obtained the blessing.

It is proper to observe here, the reformation must be *thorough*. Indulgence in *one* known sin, though we forsake one thousand, will defeat the object. And so will the neglect of a single known duty. God means to bring us fully to his terms before he accepts us. This accounts for many failures which have occurred. The subjects of them were awakened and thought they would be Christians, but finding that God would not receive them on a partial course, that is, on their own terms, they abandoned the pursuit till a more convenient season.

As it respects the *motives* with which sinners should repent, it is important to say a word, since there is much darkness and stumbling at this point. Many who have been quite willing to do their duty, have been so exceedingly jealous of their motives as to destroy confidence in the success of their endeavors.

Those who consider repentance a *fruit* of regeneration and not a *means* of obtaining it, will, of course, place the motives too high; while those who make religion to consist in a mere form, go to the other extreme. The motives urged in the scriptures are, that we are sinners, that we have sinned against light and love, that our sins will prove our ruin; and the certainty of pardon and

salvation if we repent. It may be said, the last two are selfish. Be it so ; it is enough for us that God has pressed them upon our attention more than any other. He who knew what was in man, has attempted to move him by these great arguments, and to question their validity is an impeachment of high authority. Repenting with a view to the glory of God, and being willing to be damned, as matters of experience, we believe have no existence. They are rather inventions of theorizers, which have done more harm than good, and ought to be retracted. The first is a Christian motive beyond the present grasp of the sinner, the last we cannot conceive to be attainable at all, except by final impenitence, in which case, we apprehend, the sinner will choose to be damned rather than dwell amid the holiness of heaven.

2. *It is also the duty of the sinner to pray.* Though this is implied in repentance, it is important to give it a separate consideration, because it is a duty to which there is much aversion. Besides, some professed Christians deny that the sinner ought to pray. They seem to have settled it in their own minds that God must convert him without his prayers, or he must convert himself without divine grace. This is evidently another sacrifice to a mistaken theory. The bible teaches

that "the *wicked* man should seek the Lord and call upon *him* while he is near." The Savior, who came to call sinners to repentance, says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." That no doubt of the availability of prayer might remain, he adds, "if ye, being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good gifts, to them who ask him." "He spake also another parable, to this end, that *men ought always to pray* and not to faint." St. James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him *ask* of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

If any thing further be necessary to establish this point, we may refer to nearly every instance of conversion recorded in scripture. David says of himself, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my *cry*. He brought me up also out of an *horrible pit* and miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." The Lord heard his prayer while he was yet in the "horrible pit and miry

clay ; " figurative expressions to designate the dreary, dismal, ruinous state of sin, and the utter inability of a condemned sinner to save himself either from guilt of conscience or corruption of heart. We have a similar instance in the case of the publican who went up to the temple to pray. " Standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a *sinner*. I tell you, this man went down to his house *justified*."

We do not say the sinner must pray like a Christian, with just such views, feelings, and motives. This would be requiring him to become a Christian, and then pray that he may be converted—to find the blessing and then seek after it. God requires no such thing. The sinner is to pray for *mercy*, for the grace of God to renew him ; to pray as well as he can, according to the best light he has or can obtain. Much as we deserve to perish, the Lord has proposed to save us, and given his son to die for us. Does he now require conditions we can never perform ? No, verily. What Dr. Young says in regard to virtue in general, is true in application to this duty : —

"If nothing more than *purpose* in thy power,
Thy purpose *firm* is equal to the deed.
Who does the *best* his circumstance allows,
Does *well*, acts *nobly* ; *angels could do no more*."

We repeat, sinners must pray — pray in secret, pray much, humbling themselves and confessing their sins. They must pray definitely, for *pardon* and *renewal* of heart. General prayers will not answer their purpose. They need a *particular* blessing and must have it. If parents, it will be well for them to pray in their families. We have known many to do this with excellent effect. Having determined to seek the Lord they called their families together, confessed their neglects, avowed their purpose, read the scriptures, and engaged in prayer. It was a great cross, and exceedingly humiliating; but it was a *decisive* step. A sinner thus committed before the world and his own family, will not long walk in darkness. God will impart salvation, and what he has tried to do from principle, against the strong remonstrances of his own depravity and the scorn of the world, he will be able to perform with exquisite satisfaction. It was an agonizing moment with the publican when he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," but not so when he "went down to his house justified," for "being justified by faith we have *peace* with God."

3. Another duty, and the last we will mention, is *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not

shall be damned." A *general* belief in Christ and in the scriptures is necessary to our first movement. "He that cometh unto God must believe that he *is*, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Till one has this amount of faith it is in vain to urge him to repentance.

But the faith which the penitent sinner is required to exercise is something more than this, it is the faith of *reliance*. It combines the two, *belief* with *trust*. But it is not a *dead* principle, like the presumptuous trust of impenitent men. "*They say, and do not.*" For the Savior, to meet their wishes, he must invalidate his own word and repudiate his own law. They expect without promise, that is, a promise, the conditions of which they have performed. They trust to be saved *in* their sins — to be saved in spite of *themselves* ; not now, but at death, or at some subsequent period.

The faith required is that which renounces sin, repents of it, turns from it, seeks the pardon of it ; and utterly failing of success by works of righteousness or mental anguish, falls upon Christ as the only remedy. The sinner, acting on an intellectual belief of the bible, and more or less under the influence of the Spirit of God, forsakes his evil ways and associates ; commences a life of prayer and outward obedience with a view to obtaining

pardon. But he sees the utter insufficiency of these things to merit so great a blessing. He now beholds himself "weighed in the balance and found wanting." His own righteousness appears only as filthy rags, and he stands exposed to everlasting ruin. Stripped of every other dependence, he looks away to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Submitting to his authority and pledging himself to his service, he casts his soul upon him with all its guilt and corruption, and experiences as the result, a sweet assurance of adoption into the divine family.

Faith is that act, by which he withdraws himself from every other trust, and rests entirely on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It is the crowning act in the process of salvation — the act without which, all other acts must prove unsuccessful, and which, (in the absence of all others, where circumstances do not allow of this performance,) brings peace and pardon. For this reason, it has been represented as the *only* condition of salvation, and repentance, a means of bringing the mind up to that peculiar state, in which faith is practicable.

But however we may define it, it is *our* work — an act which we must perform. And we must perform it before conversion. When the awakened jailer inquired, "Sirs, what must *I* do to be

saved?" Paul and Silas answered, "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" This is the prevailing sentiment of revelation. The sacred volume speaks but one language on the subject. And to attribute faith to any other agency, or to mystify it to the common understanding is a great evil. Yet we fear it will be found in the day of judgment, that Pollock is correct, where he says: —

"Faith was bewildered much by men who meant
To make it clear, so simple in itself,
Although so rudimental and so plain,
That none by comment could it plainer make.
It was the master stroke of wickedness,
Last effort of Abaddon's council dark,
To make man think himself a slave to fate,
And worst of all, a slave to fate in faith."

From these observations it will be perceived that though God is the immediate and efficient agent in man's salvation, man has an indispensable part to act. He cannot fold his hands and dismiss all care without hazard. He must be thoughtful and active. He will find it necessary to "*strive to enter in,*" or make an entire failure.

But he is not left to his natural resources. God knew these were insufficient. Therefore, he gave his word to reveal the whole scheme, and to admonish, reprove, correct, and guide the erring sin-

ner in the way of life. With this, he gives his Spirit to strive, to enlighten, and impress. Every sinner is as conscious of these influences as he is of sin. Christians also, bear a commission in securing the object, especially ministers of the gospel. They are to let their "light shine that others may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven." Paul was sent to the Gentiles, "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God ; that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith." The *Providence* of God also, is made subservient to the work. By all these instrumentalities sinners are aroused and excited, so that their only way of keeping from Christ is, to resist ; which many do. But some yield and are saved ; and thus show the sufficiency of the gospel system, and the practicability of salvation under it. It is in view of the amplitude of that system we are pre-monished that the men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment and condemn us if we neglect it. They repented at the preaching of Jonas, mercy, whereas we have Christ.

From what has been said we learn,

1. That those who pretend that they have never sinned are yet without God and without hope in

the world. They have not done "the first works," and therefore, so far as they do any thing religiously, they build upon the sand.

2. We learn that those who admit that they are sinners but do not repent, have no claim to the Christian character. Out of their own mouths will God judge them. They coldly confess the wrong they have done, but still persist in it, and refuse to reform.

3. It appears that no qualities, however commendable, no general morality or ceremonial piety, however rigid, constitutes one a Christian. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to *repent*." The obligation cannot be compromised. Our dislike to the duty is no excuse. The cross must be borne, the yoke of Christ taken, our loved sins confessed and forsaken; though it may be as the cutting off a right arm, or plucking out a right eye. The opposition of relatives or of associates may increase our difficulties, but it cannot alter our duty. The command of God is imperative, his authority is paramount, and we must obey or perish. Religious observances which do not involve this, are a delusion; they are an attempt to climb up some other way — to enter in through some other door. They may quiet conscience for the present, but they are deceptive. When God comes

to strip off these outward adornings, he will find an impenitent heart, full of enmity and corruption. The wicket gate of Bunyan, in his Progress, must be entered, or all other efforts at piety will prove abortive.

CHAPTER III.

A REVIVAL OF RELIGION DEFINED.

MAN is a moral agent, having a determining principle in himself, by which his whole conduct is regulated. He is, therefore, a proper subject of government, rewardable and punishable, as no being can be who acts by necessity. This is his character, no less after conversion than before. As before, he has power to resist sin, so afterward, he has power to resist God, and turn from the holy commandment. The scriptures have much to say of those who have done so, and it is to such the word revival primarily refers.

In this application of the term, it implies conviction of sin, repentance toward God, embracing confession, reformation, earnest prayer for mercy, and the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the process of restoration is about the same, with various modifications of feeling, as that pursued in becoming a Christian. Hence the address to the church of Ephesus, which had lost its

first love : — “ Remember from whence thou art fallen, and *repent* and do the *first works*, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” — *Rev.* 2 : 5.

In an accommodated sense the word is employed to denote the conversion of sinners. This use of it probably arose from the fact that the revival of Christians and the conversion of sinners, are generally coincident. Generally, we say — it is not always so. The sinner who withstands God himself, may resist the church in her best estate ; and sinners are sometimes converted when the church, as a body, is spiritually asleep. Yet such is the influence of the Christian spirit and practice in the order of God, and such is his ordinary sanction of the means employed by his faithful people, that sinners submit to Christ, when those means are properly brought to bear upon them. One of the immediate consequences of a revival of religion among Christians, is, a more direct, emphatic, judicious, and successful effort to bring sinners to Christ. Indeed, this is frequently the first and best proof of a revival the community have, and a revival which is destitute of this element is hardly entitled to the name.

Revivals of religion, then, are times of spiritual

awakening, when different classes in community have their attention directed to the great subject of salvation, and earnestly desire to lay up their treasure in heaven. One has well said : —

“ A revival of religion is simply an increase of the best desires, affections, and exertions of persons who are already pious and benevolent ; such an increase as by the blessing of heaven awakens in the ungodly an anxiety for their salvation ; and by fervent and united prayer prevails with God to send down that effectual influence of his Spirit by which sinners are converted and the society of revived Christians is enlarged. When these evidences of increased engagedness in the cause of Christ are unequivocally manifested anywhere, it is too late for an impartial observer to doubt that a genuine revival of religion has there commenced. But its actual commencement was with Christians themselves, conformably to the ancient prophesy : ‘ Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, I will increase them like a flock, and they shall know that I am the Lord.’ Wherever, by divine grace quickening the pious, a revival of religion is begun, all upright and benevolent spectators will desire and pray, that God may cause it to go on in its purity and power. And thus it will go on, and

spread and prevail till the world is gathered into the church, unless ministers of the gospel or professors of religion, by some unholy influence, or unadvised movement, or killing sloth, arrest its progress. The God of love and mercy waits to be gracious. He will always fulfil his promises when men take him at his word."

Dr. Barns describes a revival thus:—

"Let many sinners simultaneously turn to God. Let conversions to Christ, instead of being few and far between, become numerous, rapidly occurring, and decided in their character, and you have all that is usually meant, when we speak of *revivals*—so far as *conversions* are concerned. Still these are all *individual* conversions, accomplished in each case by the Holy Spirit, and in exact accordance with the design of the gospel. Each one is converted in the same way, by the same truth, by the same great agent, the Holy Spirit, as though he were alone, and not another mind been awakened or converted. It is the conversion of a number of *individuals* from sin to holiness and from Satan unto God. Look at the heavens in a clear night, and you will have an illustration of what we mean. The stars that are set in that broad zone of light which stretches over the firmament, the milky way, are single stars, each subject to its own laws, moving

in its own sphere, glorious, probably, in its own array of satellites ; but their rays meet and mingle, not less beautiful because the light of millions is blended together. So in conversion from sin to God. Take the case of a single true conversion to God and extend it to a community — to *many* individuals passing through that change, and you have all the theory of a revival of religion. It is bringing together many conversions ; arresting simultaneously many minds ; perhaps condensing into a single place, and into a few weeks, the ordinary work of many distant places and many years. The essential part is, that a sinner may be converted by the agency of the spirit of God from his sins. The same power which changes him, *may* change others also. Let substantially the same views and feelings and changes which exist in the case of the individual, exist in the case of others ; let a deep seriousness pervade a community, and a spirit of prayer be diffused there ; let the ordinary haunts of pleasure and vice be forsaken for the places of devotion, and you have the theory, so far as I know, of a revival of religion.”

The presence of unnecessary excitement, injudicious measures, and heretical notions, does not destroy the character of the work, while there is an

increase of the fruits of righteousness, and sinners are really reformed and converted to God. It is a revival of God's work, though greatly injured by human imperfections. These elements are frequently observed in revivals of religion, to the great grief of the more judicious, and no doubt to the grief of the Holy Spirit, but still, good is done. God honors his truth, (which in the most heretical revivals is more abundant than error,) and succeeds the good endeavors of his erring people, in quickening the graces of the Spirit, and bringing sinners to Christ. And we have no doubt he has often so overruled these errors as to make them the means of bringing some under the sound of the gospel, and to the knowledge of the truth, who otherwise had remained in sin.

Nor is it less certain that he sometimes makes his truth, in the hands of wicked men, quick and powerful to the accomplishment of its sacred purposes. It is a savor of life unto life to those who receive it, though administered by hypocritical hands, and with unworthy motives. Some Christians are at a loss to know how a revival can be genuine in its results which is not promoted in exact accordance with their views of truth and propriety. Tell them that a revival is accompanied by excitement, or noise, or extravagance, or is in any way

tinged with Arminianism, and they are ready to pronounce judgment against it. This was the case with many in the great revival which occurred a century ago, under the labors of Dr. Edwards, the Tenants, and others. Because there were certain phenomena, which they did not find recognized in their creed or denominational regimen, they would not countenance the work, but strove to put it down, and finally succeeded.

Now, the truth is, God, who maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and restraineth the remainder of wrath, is not limited by human ignorance or narrowness, that he cannot save except in just such circumstances. He may as easily overrule our imperfections and errors, and even heresies, if he please, as our "wrath." Why not? And it is a mark of true wisdom and humility to acknowledge his hand when the proper fruits appear, though we may not perceive the adaptation of all the means to the end. If there could be no revivals of religion without absolute perfection in the management of them, we might despair of seeing another. Errors attach to them, as to every thing else with which man has to do; but though imprudently managed, they generally produce good fruit enough to show that God is in them, and are³ therefore to be preferred to dead formality.

But this is no apology for carelessness in regard to the means we use, or the disorders we allow in revivals. Though God may make use of his word, spoken by a wicked minister, to arrest the sinner, or to quicken his children, he will not, therefore, justify the hypocrite. Such a minister is just as wicked, and ill-deserving, as though his folly had not been overruled. And those who think to justify their own extravagancies on the ground that some are converted, "comfort themselves with falsehood." God has converted none through their extravagancies, but *notwithstanding* them. The same is true of all professors who are unfaithful. They may construe the existence of a revival of religion into a divine testimonial to their piety; but it is a dangerous error. While we allow that the work is of God, we deny the justness of their claims to the credit of it.

In the salvation of men there are three agencies often put in operation, *two*, always, viz., those of God and the sinner. The sinner cannot save himself without God, and God will not save him without his consent, and co-operation. The part of God is to enlighten, impress, and draw the sinner; and when ~~he~~ yields, to pardon, renew, and adopt him into the heavenly family. ~~The~~ business of the sinner is to

submit, confess his sins, and run after God, in the way of faith and obedience. When these agencies harmonize the work is effected at once.

But it is not generally accomplished without the intervention of the third, viz., the agency of the Christian. He is a sort of mediator between the parties, and is expected to plead with God in the sinner's behalf, as Moses plead for Israel ; and to teach, exhort, and entreat the sinner, with all long-suffering and patience.

This explains a seeming contradiction in the faithful minister's movements. At one time we hear him pleading, "O Lord, revive thy work," as though a revival of religion were the work of *God*. At another, he is exhorting the sinner to repent and come to Christ, as though it were the *sinner's* work. At another time he may be heard urging the church to activity, as though the responsibility of the sinner's conversion rested upon them. Now, this is all consistent and right. There is a work for each to do, the neglect of which may be the sinner's ruin — and a faithful and intelligent minister of Christ, in rightly dividing the word, will alternately dwell upon these points and thus keep all the divinely, appointed agencies at work, to effect the one great object, the salvation of sinners. And

it may be added, where this view of the subject is entertained and energetically adopted, on the part of the ministry and membership of any church, there is a revival of religion. God blesses the means in a greater or less degree, and the largest success, consistent with human liberty and depravity, is the result.

But where a *one-sided*, or ill-balanced policy is adopted, the case is different. For instance, where the agency of God is urged with so much exclusiveness as to conceal the practicability or necessity of human agency, the hearers naturally feel that they have nothing to do. Immense harm to the cause of Christ has been done in this way. And to expect a great revival by this policy is as unphilosophical, as to expect a harvest by sunshine and rain, without breaking up the fallow ground and sowing the appropriate seed. Some, it is true, may be converted in spite of it, as some food will grow under the most unnatural culture; but it will be owing to the interposition of the merciful God, in counteracting its bad tendency by a powerful conviction of the sinner, that he must repent or be lost.

This course brings a terrible paralysis upon the church also. If God is the only agent in man's conversion, why should the church be concerned? Dare they not trust the matter with him? Are

they fearful his benevolence will not extend to some they would save? Any effort, under these circumstances, is an impertinent interference with the divine prerogatives. But let the subject be presented in its proper aspects, and the several agencies concerned, urged, as equally indispensable in the divine economy; the whole machinery exhibited in a genuine revival of religion, wears an aspect of reason and consistency which commends it to the good sense of all sober and intelligent minds. The earnest and importunate prayer of faith, the deeply excited emotion, the pathetic appeal, and the ten thousand prudential appliances employed by revivalists, have a meaning and an importance which entitles them to attention and respect.

Great, though we think not equal injury, results from the other extreme, viz., giving importance to the sinner's agency to the depreciation of the Holy Spirit. This is done by that system which requires the sinner to regenerate himself. The effect of it is, to create unworthy views of the *nature* of religion, and by establishing a wrong theory, to multiply false professors.

We are aware that these systems have received various modifications to counteract their tendency; but they are dangerous still, for the reason, that they are false and impracticable. Yet, being con-

nected with much truth, and restrained by a gracious Providence, some are converted, who come more or less under their influence. But it should be observed, when there is to be a direct effort for the promotion of a revival, these peculiarities, particularly the first named, are comparatively concealed, and superceded by better sentiments.

These remarks suggest : —

1. The importance of correct views concerning the *nature* of religion, to well-directed and efficient exertions for its promotion. If we regard it an act, or a series of acts, on the part of the sinner, and no more, we shall pursue a different course from what would be proper under other circumstances. Our concern would seem to be with the sinner alone, especially if we expected him to regenerate himself by “natural ability.” If we consider it to be an act of God, renewing the heart and life *unconditionally*, it is difficult to see the appropriateness of any effort with the sinner, whatever. The legitimate inference from this view of the subject is, that we have no part to act in the premises, and should indulge no concern. And this inference will generally exert a controlling influence, since Christians are not so fond of religious efforts as to toil where there is no possibility of success.

2. They suggest also, the proper nature and

source of a revival. A revival is not a *miraculous* work, with the occurrence of which we have nothing to do. This must not be forgotten, or we shall be found like the sluggard in harvest. Nor is it merely the work of man, created and destroyed at his will, and by his power. There are phenomena connected with it which indicate that this cannot be, and revelation confirms it. It is rather a work *both of God and man* — the result of a combination of divine and human agencies, according to certain fixed laws, which govern in the administration of the great head of the church. The Christian prays, exhorts, and instructs, and the Lord inclines his ear, and pours out his Spirit. The result is, believers are quickened, and sinners are awakened; and thus stimulated, they repent, pray, and turn to God, who has mercy upon them, and abundantly pardons.

But many resist. They wish to wait till a more convenient season. They are so wedded to pleasure, or to some other worldly pursuit, they rather risk being lost, than break off their sins now. Christ died to save them. The Spirit strives to the same end, but they delay to make their “calling and election sure.” *Others* yield to the Spirit, *they* do not. Were they to resist, they would perish like themselves. It is their acquiescence in the

will of God that secures the blessing. How important this view of the subject to efficiency in promoting a revival, is too manifest to require a moment's consideration.

3. We see too, the responsibility of Christians in reference to revivals of religion. It is no part of their duty to sit down, and idly wait for them. The farmer would not appear more ridiculous in waiting under the shade of his trees for a harvest, when he has not ploughed a furrow, or sown a seed. The pretence that we are piously bowing to the divine will, does not relieve the case. God forbids such idleness. It is an offence to him. His command is, "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, and prove me, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

It is the duty of Christians to be active. The danger is, that they will do too little, not too much. They stand between the living and the dead. Their business is to move God toward the sinner, and the sinner toward God. Not that the Divine Being is ill-disposed toward the offender, and needs to have his mind changed by the prayers of Christians, but this is his own arrangement. For infinite reasons he chooses to make man the instru-

ment of man's salvation. He "will be inquired of" to do this great thing. The more importunate, and faithful, and persevering the prayers of Christians, the more honorable to him, and the more beneficial to men. In this one instrumentality the Christian holds the power of life and death, heaven and hell, at his disposal, in an important sense. Awful responsibility! O, that all could be made to realize it!

Besides, he is to move the sinner toward God. Here is need of wisdom, of humility, of patience, of moral courage, of self-denial, of thought. Every avenue to the heart is to be tried, every susceptibility improved; and the great arguments of the gospel to be applied, and enforced in a way to make them effective.

CHAPTER IV.

PREACHING, A MEANS OF PROMOTING REVIVALS.

THE original design of preaching, was to convert men to Christ. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." — 1 Cor. 1 : 21. This is the *principal* means in the grand system of agencies, divinely adopted for man's conversion, and has probably achieved more than any other. The history of the church, as given by the evangelists and the apostles, demonstrates these positions beyond controversy. The conversion of sinners, therefore, is in some sense, the work of the ministry. Accordingly, says St. Paul, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many Fathers : for in Christ Jesus I have *begotten* you through the gospel."

In what sense this work is predicable of the ministry, is obvious from the preceding chapter. In no other sense surely, than as an humble agent sent forth to *teach* and *persuade*. This is the ex-

tent of ministerial authority. "We persuade men," says the prince of ministers. The idea of pardoning or regenerating them, did not enter his noble mind. That is a more recent conception — a product of the dark ages — as dangerous as it is false. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" The commission reads, "Go, *preach*," not forgive. The power of the ministry to convert the sinner, is nothing more than its power to *persuade* him to come to Christ. And this is a matter of personal qualification, possessed in different degrees, according to our intellectual endowments, and the measure of the grace of God, we enjoy. The efficiency of ministers, therefore, depends much on themselves — on their endeavors to understand the gospel, and preach it in the most appropriate manner. God has called them to the work and put the message into their hands. They are to study it, and urge the claims of their Master, by all the considerations it contains. It is a proclamation of pardon to the guilty, conditioned on their submission to Christ. It is to be announced, explained, and enforced, till the sinner yields to the terms, and becomes a new creature. There should be no compromise, no daubing with untempered mortar. The terms need no qualification. The minister's duty is to urge them upon the sinner's acceptance,

to make him see their reasonableness and adaptation, and feel his obligation to embrace them, and the sin and danger of neglect. We say, then,

1. The subject matter of preaching *must be true*. To misrepresent any part of the plan of salvation, or to append any thing inconsistent with its essential principles, is to impair its influence. Such unfaithfulness cannot fail to mislead. If ministers make less of religion than what it really is, or lower the terms of it to accommodate the depraved taste of their hearers, they may make converts. Many may come to the terms they propose, and find the boon they proffer ; but after all, they are not Christians. They have aimed at an insufficient object, and by perverted and partial means ; and have found a *delusion*. This kind of temporizing makes the way easier for the sinner at first, and he therefore chooses it ; but the curse of God will follow it. A good cause will gain nothing from deception or falsehood, in the end. Though it may seem to derive a present profit, when the lie is exposed there will be reaction. The plain, unvarnished truth, is the great instrument. If this does not secure the object, we may despair.

But observe, we make no allusion to the mode of its presentation or enforcement. Many, in speaking of the *truth* as the instrument of saving

men, use it in opposition to various prudential measures. Ask them, Do you hold protracted meetings, or invite sinners forward for prayer? They reply, "No, we depend on the *truth*;" as though these measures were falsehood. Our reference is to truth as a simple element; and in regard to the best mode of attracting the attention of the sinner to it, or inducing him to walk by its teachings, we shall speak hereafter. The measures, however, just named, under proper management have, in our opinion, high claims to our consideration.

2. Preaching should be *aimed directly at the conversion of sinners*, if we would have it effective in promoting a revival of religion. With many, we fear, this object is not desired, much less sought; and were it by any means to be gained, it would be matter of regret. Nothing would be more fatal to the popularity and peace of some ministers among their own people, than a revival. However angels in heaven might rejoice over the event, there would be demonstrations of wrath in such societies, sufficient to show that they have not the slightest feeling in common with these celestial beings. But there is no danger, their ministers are as faithless as themselves, and no more think of converting sinners, than of raising the dead.

Nor do all who are reputed evangelical ministers aim at this. If sinners were to be converted under the ministrations of some of them, they would be astonished. They aim to preach *able* sermons, to instruct, to inculcate morality, explode heresy, &c. The conversion of the sinner does not enter into their plans, and they experience no disappointment at his continued impenitence. This is, no doubt, true in regard to many whose creed is generally unexceptionable. And is it not often true, too, with some who believe in revivals, and at times aim to promote them? We fear it may be, for they do not *appear* to think of the matter, and the sinner does not suspect them.

Let us be fully understood. We do not deny that God may bless the word thus preached, and even make false sentiments to subserve his glory, but we know this is not his plan. He *may* prosper the random shot of the sportsman, but it is not probable he *will* do it. There is about as much chance for success in the one case as the other. Revivals of religion are not produced by such indifference. Whitefield, one of the most effective revivalists, not only aimed at the conversion of sinners, but expected it wherever he went. So did Wesley, and Fletcher, and Edwards, and the Tenants, and a multitude of others. Indeed, we know of no min-

ister distinguished for success, who does not. If this is not the aim of a minister, he will not adapt his preaching to it. His whole course will be awkward and unimpressive, as a means of conversion.

Mr. Finney gives us a case directly in point. He says: — “There were two young ministers who had entered the ministry at the same time. One of them had great success in converting sinners, the other none. The latter inquired of the other, one day, what was the reason of this difference. Why, replied the other, the reason is, that I *aim* at a different end from you, in preaching. My object is to convert sinners, but you aim at no such thing. And then you go and lay it to the sovereignty of God, that you do not produce the same effect, when you never aim at it. Here, take one of my sermons and preach it to your people, and see what the effect will be. The man did so, and preached the sermon, and it did produce effect. He was frightened when sinners began to weep; and when one came to him after meeting to inquire what he should do, the minister apologized to him, and said, “I did not aim to wound you, I am sorry if I have hurt your feelings.”

The necessary difference between sermons aimed at a sinner's conversion, and sermons aimed at

any other object, is remarkable. Their inception, their terms, and their tones ; the facts and arguments, by which they are enforced, and the emotion and emphasis of their delivery, are all different — different as honesty and hypocrisy, truth and fiction, the power of God and the imbecility of man. To succeed with the one, requires a miracle, with the other, success is the natural and gracious result of heaven-appointed means.

This explains why many good preachers, and good men, accomplish so little. They aim at nothing, or not at the right object. They content themselves with preaching the truth in general, and leave God and the hearer to apply it ; or with preaching truths which are foreign from the great object. They make preaching an *end*, rather than a *means* ; and seem to think their work done when the truth is announced ; whereas, they ought to regard it as an instrument put into their hands, not merely to explain, but to wield, so as to open sinners' eyes, " and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins." They are not to be mere *lecturers*, to exhibit the instrument and describe its uses, but like a practising surgeon, to *apply* it, and see that its purpose is answered. Till

they do so they are "unskilful in the word of righteousness," whatever their qualifications.

Were all ministers to regard the subject in this light, and make the conversion of sinners their first, and highest, and only aim, the gospel would be what it is described, viz., "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." Says the excellent Mr. Baxter :

"If your hearts be not set on the end of your labors, and if you do not long to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and study and preach in hope, you are not likely to see much success. It is a sign of a false, self-seeking heart, when a person is contented to be still doing, without seeing any fruit of his labor. And I have observed that God seldom blesses any man's work so much as his whose heart is set upon the success of it. Let it be the property of Judas to have more regard to the bag than to the business ; leave it to such worldlings as he to be satisfied, if they have their salary and the esteem of the people ; but let all that preach for Christ and the salvation of men, be dissatisfied, till they have the thing they preach for. He never had the right ends of a

preacher in view, who is indifferent whether he obtains them or not ; who is not grieved when he misses them, and rejoiced when he can see the desired issue. When a man only studies what to say, and how to spend the hour with commendation, without looking any more after it, but to know what the people think of his abilities, and thus hold on from year to year, I must needs think that he preaches for himself ; that he drives on a private trade of his own, and that when he preaches Christ, he preaches not *for* Christ, how excellently soever he may seem to do it. I know a faithful minister may have comfort when he wants success. ‘ Though Israel is not gathered, our reward is with the Lord.’ Our acceptance is not according to our fruit, but according to our labor. But then he who longs not for the success of his labors, can have none of this comfort, because he is not a faithful laborer. This is only for those whose hearts are set upon the end, and grieved if they miss it. I confess, for my part, that I wonder at some ancient, reverend men, who have lived thirty, or forty, or fifty years with an unprofitable people, where they have been scarcely able to discern any fruit of their labors, that they can with so much patience continue there. I should not be easily satisfied to spend my days in such a man-

ner, but should suspect that it was the will of God I should go somewhere else, that another might come there, better suited to them and more useful among them." — *Baxter's Reformed Pastor*.

3. Preaching should have a direct application to the *hearers*. They must be made to understand that the preacher means *them* — is preaching to them, and about them. This is indispensable. Nothing will be done without it. While the people suppose their minister is talking about the Jews, or the Sodomites, or any other than themselves, he preaches in vain. They must be made to feel that *they* are aimed at, involved; that the object of the preacher is to save them. A distinguished minister has well said, "A sermon without an application, is like a body without a soul."

This course is sanctioned by high authority. Thus preached the prophets. Said Nathan to David, "*Thou* art the man." This was to the point, and had the desired effect. "Choose *you* this day whom ye will serve," is equally direct. The practice of Christ and the apostles was the same. When Peter preached, "Let the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom *ye have crucified*, both Lord and Christ," his hearers were "pricked in their hearts, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This

has been a stamped feature of successful preaching in every age. It forms a part of the printed policy of that church which has been distinguished by the number of her converts and the extent of her usefulness during the last century, more, perhaps, than any other in the world. To the question in her formulary, "What is the best general method of preaching?" it is replied, 1. "To convince. 2. To offer Christ. 3. To invite. 4. To build up; and to do this in some measure in every sermon." But this is *all application*, and cannot fail to attract attention. *Self*, is an interesting subject. An inferior speaker can scarcely fail to command a hearing, when he speaks to men of *themselves*, and their relations. If he deals faithfully, but kindly with them, he cannot avoid doing them good.

In this connection, it is proper to say, also, that preaching should be close and appropriate. It should reach the hearer's case, remove his doubts, destroy his excuses, and drive him out of his hiding places. Men are restrained from repentance by different considerations. These must be detected and exposed, and the sinner be stripped of every apology for neglect, and made to appear guilty before God. This is indispensable. The best general preaching, on the awakening doctrines of the

gospel, may be resisted by the respective hearers, on the ground that it does not touch their case. They have some excuse for inattention to the subject, which is peculiar to themselves, and therefore, are not reached. Hence the necessity of demolishing all the intrenchments of sinners, and hunting them out of every subterfuge to which they may resort. This may require much of what is called "small talk," that is, talk about the every day affairs of life, to which many object, but it cannot be avoided. If we will promote revivals, we must come at the difficulties in the way, and ply the sinner with such means as are best adapted to move him, however unclassical.

4. Preaching should be *practical* and *experimental*. We use these terms in opposition to what is called *theoretical* or *doctrinal* preaching, wherein sentiments are advocated which have no practical, or experimental bearing. Such preaching may amuse the intellect, or gratify the curiosity, but it cannot do much toward bringing sinners to Christ, however just its positions. *Doctrine*, is the rule of practice and experience. It is the frame-work of the spiritual building, and in this sense is to be preached, and enforced upon the attention of men as something to be *done*, or *experienced*, as well as believed. Dry and speculative theorizing in the

pulpit, is ridiculous. God does not send his ministers on such an errand. They are to preach the gospel — preach that men should repent, — to persuade men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God ; in the doing of which, they are to present all the doctrines, facts, and precepts of Christianity, which may subserve the object. They must preach doctrine, but they are to preach it *practically*, so that when the sinner is indoctrinated as to the nature of repentance, or the atonement by Christ, he may feel himself pressed to a personal experience of what he has heard. This is indoctrinating the people to some purpose.

Preached in this way, the doctrines of the gospel will become "the power of God unto salvation ;" but preached speculatively, or as mere matters of intelligence and belief, they may become a source of bitter debate and contention, but will not benefit the heart, or improve the life.

5. Preaching should embrace the *whole gospel*, and that in such *proportions*, as the circumstances of the people require. Some ministers are defective in this respect. They adhere too closely to one class of subjects, so they have but one chance in many to succeed, and are very liable to become monotonous, and entirely fail of their object. Many dwell chiefly on the terrors of the law,

Preach when and where they may, they take Mount Sinai in their course, till their hearers become as familiar with its vocabulary of impressive words, as with their Christian names. Others dwell upon the love of God, till it appears next to impossible that he should punish the wicked according to his word. And others still, are continually discoursing upon the beauties of holiness. Those who are engaged in the different reforms of the age, are particularly liable to err in this respect. They drive their hobby into every place, and urge his claims upon all occasions.

But it is not the better way. Experience and observation show, that, what is appropriate and effective at one time, is not so at another. There are seasons when the terrors of the law are just what is needed; but there are others when the same hearers need a different class of truths. We say, then, the whole gospel should be preached. Every important fact and argument must be brought out, and impressed upon the hearer with all possible force. He should be made to feel that he is a sinner, under the curse of the law, and exposed to interminable ruin. He must also be directed to Christ, as the only remedy for sin, and urged to him without delay. His obligation cannot be too powerfully enforced. He ought to see

that he is bound to renounce the world, and come to Christ *now*. This is difficult, we know; for some ministers have preached human inability so much and so miserably, sinners have taken the advantage of it to deny their obligations, and excuse their neglect. But they must be resisted, and taught, whatever their loss and weakness in Adam, in Christ they are able to repent so as to be converted. Till they are made to feel their obligation, nothing will be done.

In effecting this object, it will be necessary to bring to view the strivings of the Spirit, as an indication of the divine will to save, and of human ability to yield thereto. Also the possibility of grieving the Spirit, the danger of delay, and the certainty of ruin, without repentance and reformation. These are the great truths by which God designs to reform men, and bring them to heaven. And they should be preached in such proportions as circumstances may seem to require, and kept before the people in one aspect or another, till they take effect, and produce the result desired.

This is what we mean by preaching the whole gospel. Not that we are to discourse upon every character, and circumstance referred to in the bible, merely because we find it there, irrespective

of its bearings. This may indicate reverence for the *book*, but it argues extreme ignorance of the use to be made of it. Ministers are left to their own discretion as to the proper division of the word; but if they have the salvation of their hearers at heart, as the prime object of their endeavors, and are possessed of a tolerable knowledge of human nature, and an ordinary degree of common sense, and are not pledged to a cumbersome system of operations, they will not essentially err from the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

6. It must be *simple* in its language and style. Preaching can be of no service to the people unless it is understood; and it will not be understood by the masses, unless it be in the language and style of common life. Strange, and obscure terms in the pulpit, argue more for the pride and conceit of the minister, than for his piety or good taste. They strongly indicate that the conversion of the people is not his object, or that he is deficient in judgment. The language employed by Jesus and his Apostles, was perfectly simple. St. Paul, who understood language equal to any man of his age, was decided upon this point. "I had rather," said he, "speak five words with my understanding, than by my voice I might teach others

also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

As to the style of delivery, the conversational has its advantages, yet it is by no means adapted to all subjects and circumstances. This is a matter to be regulated by good taste and common sense, more than by specific rules. Those who pretend to give particular directions here, show that they have more of *art* than of *nature*, in their own style ; and more of monotony than versatility. The style appropriate on one subject, would be very inappropriate on another. The same may be said of occasions, and objects aimed at, of the feelings of the speaker, and the audience. All these things exert an influence on the style, and as they vary, so the style must vary to be appropriate. We will only say, therefore, let the style correspond with the occasion. This is *nature*, and nature is *perfect* here.

The subject should be made simple by *illustrations*. These may be drawn from facts, or from imagination, only let them be such as are understood by the people. We have an illustrious example of this in our divine Savior. Every principle was simplified and enforced by an appropriate parable or story. The servant ought not to be above his Lord in this respect. If a fact, or sup-

position will explain the matter, and give it more force, he is unworthy of the ministerial office, who conceals it, to avoid the reproach of "telling stories in the pulpit." The remarks of Mr. Finney are apposite. He says,

"There are millions of facts that can be used to advantage, and yet very few ministers *dare* to use them, for fear somebody will reproach them. 'O,' says somebody, 'he tells stories!' Tells stories! Why, that is the way Jesus Christ preached. And it is the only way to preach. Facts, real or supposed, should be used to show the truth. Truths not illustrated, are generally just as well calculated to convert sinners, as a mathematical demonstration. Is it always to be so? Shall it always be matter of reproach, that ministers follow the example of Jesus Christ, in *illustrating* truths by facts? Let them do it, and let fools reproach them as story-telling ministers. They have Jesus Christ and common sense on their side.

"The illustrations should be drawn from *common life* and the common business of society. I once heard a minister illustrate his ideas by the manner in which merchants transact business in their stores. Another minister who was present made some remarks to him afterwards. He ob-

jected to this illustration particularly, because, he said, it was too familiar, and was letting down the dignity of the pulpit. He said all illustrations in preaching should be drawn from ancient history, or from some elevated source, that would keep up the dignity of the pulpit. Dignity indeed! Just the language of the devil. He rejoices in it. Why, the object of an illustration is, to make the people *see the truth*, not to bolster up pulpit dignity. * * * * The illustration should, if possible, be a matter of common occurrence, and the *more* common the occurrence, the more sure it will be, not to fix attention upon *itself*, but it serves as a medium through which the truth is conveyed. I have been pained at the very heart at hearing illustrations drawn from ancient history, of which not one in a hundred of the congregation had ever heard. The very manner in which they were adverted to, was strongly tinctured, to say the least, with the appearance of vanity, and an attempt to surprise the people with an exhibition of learning. The Savior always illustrated his instructions by things that were taking place among the people to whom he preached, and with which their minds were familiar. He descended often far below what is now supposed to be essential to support the dignity of the pulpit. He talked about the hens and

chickens, and children in the market places, and sheep and lambs, and shepherds and farmers, and husbandmen and merchants. And when he talked about kings, as in the marriage of the king's son, and the nobleman that went into a far country to receive a kingdom, he had reference to historical facts, that were well known among the people at the time."

Ministers who will not come down to the people, will do very little for a revival. They may preach splendidly, in the esteem of the world, and heartless professors, but the cause of God will suffer in their hands. They set up a standard of taste and propriety, in view of which Christianity is coarse and vulgar; and the sooner they renounce the pulpit, the better it will be for the cause.

7. Preaching should be addressed to the *whole man*. Some ministers are so much afraid the *passions* of their hearers will get excited, they address their intellects only, and repudiate all effort to arouse their feelings. If by any means they become interested in the subject of religion, and inquire what "they must do to be saved," they are suspected of being under the reign of passion, and are rather hindered than encouraged in the pursuit. The principle of such ministers seems to be, that God has every thing to do with the intellect,

and nothing with the heart; that it is proper to enlighten the understanding, but wrong to move the sensibilities. Another class take the opposite extreme. They play upon the sensibilities to the neglect of the intellect, and raise a storm of feeling, there is no intelligence to govern or direct.

Now, these are evils to be avoided; in doing which, it is necessary to address the whole man. The mind should be informed, that it may *perceive* the will of God, and know *what* to do. But this will effect nothing of itself. Sinners generally *know* their duty, long before they *do* it. Their necessity is not *light*, so much as *heat*, and it ought not to be concealed. It is very comforting to them, to be excused from blame on the ground of ignorance. But it is a vain excuse. Yet, we allow they should be enlightened. They ought to have "line upon line, and precept upon precept." But this is not enough. The great truths of revelation, the sinner's sin and guilt, his mortality and exposure to eternal sorrow, the death of Christ, the resurrection and judgment, heaven and hell; and all other truths calculated to move his sympathies, or excite his hopes or fears, and thus lead him to action, are to be brought before his mind with the vividness of lightning, and pressed upon his attention till he is overwhelmed with emotion, and

submits to God. It is not with religion as with some other things, in reference to which we are disposed to do our duty as soon as we know it. We come to religious duties reluctantly. Our will, our taste, our affections, our friends, our pleasures, perhaps our emolument, are against it; and we approach the work as we do the grave, in opposition to every principle of our fallen nature. We need, therefore, the prompting of high excitement — to have our fears and hopes aroused to the liveliest sensibility, in order to overcome aversion and outward circumstances, and take up the cross. To talk of becoming Christians without excitement, is absurd. As well may we pluck out a right eye, or amputate a right hand without emotion, as repent and become Christians without excitement.

We say, then, that preaching to promote a revival of religion, must appeal both to the *head* and the *heart*; *illuminate* and *move*. The attention must be fixed, the belief and conviction of the truth confirmed, the conscience aroused, the fears alarmed and the hopes excited, the purposes formed, and the *whole man pledged and consecrated* to God.

8. Ministers should *preach from the heart*, that they should *feel the worth of souls and deeply salvation*. More depends upon this

than is generally apprehended. "It is the *truth*," says the dull and heartless preacher, "that is to do the work — the naked truth." So he doles it out to his hearers in a stupid and spiritless manner for years, with no better effect than might have attended a course of lectures on the "Arabian Nights," and then comforts himself that he is not to blame, because he has preached the truth.

Some who show more life and animation, succeed but little better, because their life is *intellectual* or natural, and not *solemnly religious* and *sympathetic*. The feeling to which we allude is that of deep *Christian affection*, producing sympathy with Christ in his agony for sinners, and groaning of spirit to save them, which cannot be uttered. It is a *travail* of soul, such as St. Paul had for the Galatians, and Jeremiah for Israel.

If ministers would cultivate this state of mind, they could hardly fail of aiming at the right object, or of gaining it. It gives ease to their manners, appropriateness to their thoughts, and power to their words. It enables them to speak in a language which reaches the soul — to speak with the whole man — the countenance, the eye, the gestures, the body and spirit. "How important," it is remarked by one, "that a minister should *feel* what he says. Then, his actions will of course

correspond to his words. It requires the utmost stretch of art on the stage, for the actors to make their hearers *feel*. The design of elocution, is to teach this skill. But if a man *feels* his subject fully, he will *naturally* do it. See any common man in the streets who is earnest in talking. See with what force he gestures. See a woman or a child in earnest. How natural. To gesture with their hands, is as natural as to move their tongue or lips. It is the perfection of eloquence. Let a minister only *feel* what he says, and not be tied to his notes, to read an essay, or to speak a piece, like a school boy ; first on one foot and then on the other, put out first one hand, and then the other : let him speak as he feels, and act as he feels, and he will be eloquent. Gestures are of more importance than is generally supposed. Mere words will never express the full meaning of the gospel. The *manner* of saying it, is almost every thing."

This is a fruitful source of ministerial success, and it is scriptural. Those who prosecute the ministry without feeling, and ridicule "clerical tears," know not what they do. There is divine truth in such emotions, as well as in the sentiments to which they give emphasis. "He that goeth forth and ~~warpath~~, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless ⁱⁿ with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves

with him." — Psalm 26 : 6. Not that the emotions of the speaker convert the hearer. This is not presumed. But they attract his attention to the message itself, they excite his fears, and sympathies, and by holding him to the consideration of the great truths exhibited, they become a "savor of life" to his soul.

Those who are familiar with the history of revivals, need not be told that the most successful preaching has been uniformly characterized by the strongest emotion in the preacher. Who has not read of the agony of Fletcher, John Smith, Bramwell, and Summerfield, before entering the pulpit, and while preaching. The feelings of Whitefield, in the great revival of his age, were often the most intense. He was completely prostrated by travail of soul for sinners. Dr. Griffin, speaking of a revival under his own ministry, says : —

"In the afternnon, in alluding to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, (in neighboring towns,) and we were left; and to the awful prospects of sinners in middle life, if another revival should not come in twelve or fifteen years, I seemed to take an eternal leave of families out of Christ; I came near *falling*; I thought I should be obliged to stop; but I was carried through. The next day it was apparent that a revival had

commenced; a dozen heads of families of the most respectable class were under conviction; and in the course of the winter, and the following year, a hundred were hopefully added to the Lord." Speaking of his feelings a little previous, when he heard of revivals in other towns, and saw none among his own people, he says, - *The agonies of that hour can never be told."*

This explains how it is that unlettered ministers are frequently the most eloquent and successful. They enter the work, not *because* they are learned, or covet it; but because they are called of God, and have an intense desire to bring sinners to Christ. In this spirit they prepare for the pulpit, and preach only what they *feel*; and that for the purpose of "winning souls." The cause is vastly better off with such ministers, desirable as more knowledge is, than with learned stoics. The former will have revivals, and multiply converts wherever they go, while the latter will darken counsel by the multitude of words, and palsy the energies of any people who may be cursed with their services.

9. We will only add, preaching should be *extempore*. If the business of the ministry was only *unounce* the truth, the case would be different. *et* is to be secured, which requires the

soul's deepest sympathy, and the fullest manifestation of it in treating with sinners. A sympathy arising from Christian affection, and, aroused by the present discovery of the ruinous results of continued impenitence, rather than by reading the conceptions of other days, and perhaps of other minds. It is not enough for the hearer to see his minister weeping over the touching language of a studied manuscript, written he knows not when. He wishes to hear him speak in the expressive language of his present emotions. There is always a sort of distrust connected with the sight of a manuscript, chilling to the sensibilities. Besides, it is impossible for a minister to read with as much *emphasis* and power as he may speak. He needs to *see* his hearers, and to have them see him. The Maker of the "human face divine," gave a tongue to every feature. Reading deranges the whole, so that no one speaks naturally. There is power, also, in gesture, but reading destroys it. In fact, it mars the whole performance. The heart is comparatively stupified, the hands tied, the feet fettered, the body often transfixed, and every expression of the countenance perverted.

Extemporary preaching has equal advantage as a mode of instruction. By universal consent and approval, professors and teachers generally,

extemporize. Readers, if such an anomaly were to appear, would find no patronage. Parents wish their children taken under close and familiar tuition, and holden to the work till they are compelled to understand. The children of God, and sinners too, need a similar training.

But why do not the judge and the advocate read? What would a client say, even a sermon reading minister, were his lawyer to read a plea? Would he be pleased with the idea? Is it not nearly certain that such a lawyer would get no business? Or why is it, that sermon reading ministers often lay aside their notes in time of revival? The answer is one — extemporary speaking is the more effective. So we believe, and so we teach, and the history of preaching sustains us in our position.

But aside from all these considerations, extemporary preaching was the *model* style. Jesus Christ, we think, was never suspected of preaching a written sermon. He spake from other influences than that of a manuscript. The message was in his *heart* and mind, and he preached from the intensity of his love for a perishing world. And so did the apostles, who testified of his resurrection. Reading sermons is a modern invention, owing its origin to political jealousy. With that jealousy it should have passed away into everlasting disuse.

CHAPTER V.

PASTORAL AND OTHER MINISTERIAL DUTIES CONNECTED WITH REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

PASTORAL visiting is a difficult part of ministerial duty, and needs to be studied as well as preaching. But knowledge is not enough ; there must be a "*mind*" for the work. The duties of the pulpit can be better sustained without proper sympathies, than those of the pastorate. They bring the preacher less in contact with the people, and, therefore, less expose his moral defects ; and besides, the temptations to unfaithfulness, are not so great. A few suggestions upon the subject may be important.

1. Pastoral visits should be spiritual. They ought to be so decidedly religious in their character, the people may see that the pastor is fully imbued with the spirit of his Master. Pastoral visits which are more social and worldly than religious, will injure ministerial influence, and hinder the work of God. Some preachers counteract their pulpit labors by trifling intercourse with the people.

2. They ought, also, to be improved with direct reference to the *salvation of the people*. This should be their all-absorbing object. Ministers who visit under the controlling influence of this motive, will do good. If they are sufficiently personal and searching in their conversation, and press the truth home upon the heart and conscience of their people, insisting on immediate repentance, they can hardly fail to see the work of God revive. This means has succeeded where the pulpit has failed.

But everything depends on the manner in which the work is done. A few general remarks to the family in the mass, is not enough. Those we would especially benefit must be separately examined, and urged to immediate action. One of the most interesting revivals with which we have been acquainted, commenced in this way, against the greatest discouragements. The pastor persuaded an individual, by a long conversation, to take a stand on the Lord's side. It was done, privately then, and publicly at the next evening meeting, and exerted just the influence desired. A glorious revival commenced, which resulted in the conversion of hundreds.

8. Pastoral visits should be made at the right time, and as frequently as the circumstances of the

people require. Care must be taken not to interfere with domestic arrangements, or the demands of business. Little can be done out of time — when the family is in confusion, or in a hurry, or particularly engaged in other matters. These things are all to be considered, yet not so as to allow them to deter us from duty. The most trifling inconvenience is sometimes made an apology for neglect; but we had better act against circumstances than not to act at all.

As to the frequency of such visits, it is obvious no definite rule can be given. Ministers should devote the time and strength they may appropriate to this department of service, as the spiritual wants of the people require. To say they will visit each family once a year, or once a quarter, is to intimate that their visits are useless. What would be thought of a physician who should adopt such a rule? Yet it would be just as proper, as for a minister. The physician visits those who *need* him, and whom he may benefit; and so should the pastor; and let others thank God that they can live without so much nursing. Going by this rule, ministers often find it necessary to visit some families ten times, where they do others once. And not unfrequently they nearly forsake the members of the church, to go into the highways and hedges,

and compel sinners to come in. And this is right. We believe Jesus would do the same.

Says Mr. Baxter, on the subject, "Being acquainted with all the flock, we must take diligent heed to them, or do the work of a pastor toward every individual. And one would imagine that all reasonable men would be so well satisfied in regard to this that nothing need be said to recommend it. Does not a careful shepherd look to every individual sheep, and a good physician attend every individual patient? Why then should not the shepherds and physicians of the church take heed to every individual member of their charge. Christ himself, the great and good shepherd, who has the whole flock to look after, takes care of every individual; like him whom he describes in his parable, who left the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness to seek after one that was lost. Paul taught the people publicly, and from house to house. He 'warned every man, and taught every man, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' We are to watch for souls as those that must give an account how we have done it."

The pastoral office furnishes great facilities for promoting revivals. It gives opportunity to stir up the church, to admonish the backslider, and per-

suade the impenitent sinner to Christ. It is one of the most efficient means of commencing the work, and is as necessary to its continuance and extension, as preaching the gospel publicly. Thus the apostles "daily in the temple, and in every house, ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Ministers may have revivals without attending to this duty, but it is certain they would have many more, and more powerful ones, if they would take up their cross and follow Christ in this respect. Whatever the writer may have accomplished in bringing men to repentance has been done in a great measure, by this means. It has often helped out poor preaching, and made it vastly more useful than it otherwise would have been. Besides, it has brought many to the house of prayer who would not have come, but for the personal attentions of the preacher. They felt under obligation to reciprocate his kindness in calling on them; and in discharging that obligation, they became interested, awakened, and converted.

2. Another duty of ministers is to appoint and superintend prayer meetings. Such meetings are desirable, because social prayer is a powerful means of revival. They bring the church directly before God in the most solemn manner. His blessing is asked and received, and his people are

united and strengthened. This calls them out in exhortation, and other appropriate endeavors, by which means they cease to be obstructions to the work, and contribute largely to its advancement. Revivals depend as much on the church as the minister, and every minister who is wise to win souls, will not fail to have as many prayer meetings in different parts of his charge, as may be necessary to put in lively exercise all the gifts and graces of his people.

Prayer meetings, however, should be managed with care. Otherwise, they may become scenes of confusion, or deadly monotony, and lose their good effect. The prayers and exhortations should generally be short and directed to some point, the singing appropriate and solemn, and every exercise, prompt, devotional, energetic, and off-hand. Long, stupid, and spiritless prayer meetings are a curse to any church, as they expose their heartlessness, and in effect, say to the world that religion is a heartless thing. A minister, to manage this matter judiciously, will need much reflection. He will find it necessary at times to stimulate, and then to restrain; to teach and to exhort; and to vary the exercises in many different ways, to keep up the interest and hold his people to the work.

8. It is important also, that ministers appoint

inquiry and other meetings, with a view to detect any religious interest there may be in the community, and direct it to the right result. Many preach the gospel, without looking for the fruit, which, as ministers, they are authorized to expect. While they profess to seek the conversion of men to Christ, they are infidels themselves in regard to his promises, and the power of his word, or they would expect sinners to be awakened under their ministry. But in spite of their unbelief, some are awakened in every place, either by the Spirit directly, or by Christian effort, or the providence of God, and secretly inquire what they shall do to be saved. And here they stop.

Now, if ministers in anticipation of such feelings, would hold inquiry and other meetings to bring out those secret inquiries, and help them to decide and act as they ought, they would find fruit, where they now perceive nothing but barrenness. A certain minister was induced by extreme persuasion to appoint a meeting of this sort. It was against his feelings and his faith, or rather unbelief, but to his surprise he found scores of deeply penitent sinners who were only waiting such an opportunity to manifest their feelings. A powerful revival followed.

But many are so much afraid, that they shall

have the mortification of a failure, they do not dare to venture. Therefore they give a general exhortation and turn their hearers out into the world to be overwhelmed by counter influences, and lose all their conviction. Whereas, if they were invited to arise, or come forward for prayers, or come to an inquiry meeting, they would cherish their convictions, and not "receive the grace of God in vain." Ministers who will do nothing of this sort, need not expect to be much engrossed with revivals. The Holy Ghost will shun them, and so will awakened sinners, especially if there are other ministers in the community who pursue a more rational course.

Such measures are beneficial in many ways. They are creditable to the minister, as they imply an honest purpose on his part to save souls. He has preached the truth, and now he is looking for the gracious effect. The sinner sees that he is in earnest — that he aims at a definite object, and respects him for his love for the people. They direct the attention of the church, also, to the same point, and if there is piety in the body, they will elicit prayers and other personal efforts to win sinners to Christ, which would not otherwise have been suggested. This is very important. If we want a revival we must keep the mind of the

church directed toward it, and ever panting and laboring for it. But finally, such measures, where there is conviction in the community, turn it to the best possible account. They bring the sinner out from the world, and commit him to the cross, so that he finds it difficult to retreat.

We will not insist on any *particular* measure as indispensable. Inquiry meetings, class meetings, coming to the altar, or the anxious seats, or rising in the congregation, are all good in their place. A skilful minister, who is acquainted with the circumstances of his people, will probably find it necessary to vary his measures. One point is to be gained, viz., to bring the sinner to Christ. In order to this, he must be broken off from the world, from his habits, and associations. He must be induced to take up his cross, and *follow* Christ. All these measures have a direct tendency to bring him to this point. And till he is so broken down, so contrite and teachable as to submit to these or any other prudential means, that are harmless in themselves, and are recommended to him, he cannot be saved. He shows a pride and stubbornness, inconsistent with the submission of genuine penitence, and needs to have his heart probed to the bottom rather than mollified with ointment.

But to rein men right up to make a decision, and

openly commit themselves to Christ, is a great cross. The devil and wicked men, with a large class of heartless professors of one church and another, have made so much noise about these means, and generally raise such an excitement when they are adopted, every good minister has not courage enough to put them in operation. For it requires double the courage to do this work it does to preach the truth, however pointedly. It is astonishing to see with how much timidity it is approached, and, then, how soon it is abandoned. Instead of prosecuting it with energy, resisting all opposition, and working our way along in good cheer, and with invincible determination to complete success, we too often quiet our consciences without any effort at all worthy of the object. Either we have not faith enough, or the fear of man is before our eyes, or we are concerned for our popularity, or the fear of persecution, or that we shall not succeed, or that some of the dear hearers will leave us; or from some other miserable consideration, we are often spell-bound, and our efforts, if we make any of the kind, are mere abortions. But blessed be God, notwithstanding all this, our trembling endeavors have sometimes succeeded beyond our highest expectations, and at other times we have had a better state of mind for the work. Till these measures

were adopted, little was done effectually to bring sinners to Christ, and we think, as little will be done after they are laid aside.

4. It is important, too, that ministers so *improve the various occasions which occur*, as to keep the public mind directed to this subject. There is great danger of monotony. This is one of the most difficult things to prevent without wandering from the subject, and yet it is fatal to religious interest. To avoid it, some ministers introduce popular subjects which have no direct tendency to bring their people to God, and thus keep them interested to little purpose. But this is not the better course. We should rather take advantage of circumstances. Convictions, conversions, baptisms, admissions to the church, deaths, and striking providences furnish ample occasions for impressive discourses, and should be improved to deepen public feeling and press sinners to Christ. We think of brethren who have a peculiar faculty for this business. Their people are always awake, always expecting good times, and preparing for them. Every passing event is seized upon to give a new impulse to the work, and like successive waves, each raises the interest a little higher than it was before, or opens up a new and thrilling vein of thought, and thus holds the mind to the great point without weariness or satiety.

Entertaining these views, we have regretted to notice a growing indisposition among ministers to preach funeral sermons. There certainly is no time when the mind is more flexible, than when humbled and oppressed by affliction. Health and prosperity, though they increase our obligations to love and obey God, only harden the hearts of men, and render them less willing to be instructed. They will not hear on the subject, because they are all absorbed with the world. Many do not attend meeting, and more attend from custom or fashion, than religious principle. Now, if we may not improve a reverse of fortune, to urge them to repentance, when shall we do it? This is just the time — God's time. He has broken up the fallow ground, and calls upon his ministers to sow the seed. And how can they do it better than by preaching a sermon directly on the subject?

Our opinion is, that funeral occasions are among the most favorable opportunities we have for making a religious impression. And we regard this aversion to preaching funeral sermons as a bad omen. If it does not arise from a spirit of concession to the dead and irreligious philosophy of this world, we mistake. The spirit of piety and of revival — that spirit which seeks occasion to do good, it seems to us, will seize upon all such providences with avidity, and use them for God and the conversion

of sinners. But the language of the world is, "be quiet, don't afflict the afflicted, don't get up an excitement, bury the dead with the least religious stir possible, and let us go on in sin without disturbance." But God's ways are not as man's ways. He afflicts men to disturb their dreams — to wake them up, and drive them from their sins, before they sink into hell. And if we do not co-operate with him we shall be at fault.

6. These duties must be done with *deep and solemn interest*. A mere mechanical performance will avail nothing. The mind must be imbued — it must be in sympathy with the Son of David when he weeps over Jerusalem. There should be a deep sense of eternal realities, exciting the soul with intense desire and earnest prayer. This will command attention and respect. The appearance of such a minister is overpowering. His spirit is ever kind, and his words smooth, but pathetic. His authority is rather the authority of entreaty than command, and it bends the will more by persuasion than threatening.

We have sometimes heard ministers address their people in a tone of denunciation and fretfulness, but never with good effect. We have known them to do it, also, in a rather light and jovial spirit. We prefer the latter, but do not believe it

well adapted to bring sinners to an immediate decision. A controversial spirit is no better. It may command respect for the talents of the preacher, but it seldom leads the sinner to Christ. An affectionate tenderness, such as a father feels for his children, is the right temper for a minister of Jesus.

The remarks of Hall on the spirit necessary in preaching, are directly in point here, for the ministerial work is one.

“In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, an air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that while with unsparing fidelity, we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the word of God, is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight upon our hearers, it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips; and we may then expect them to realize its solemn import, when they see that we ourselves are ready to sink under it. ‘Of whom I have told you before,’ said St. Paul, ‘and now tell you weeping,

that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.' What force does that affecting declaration derive from these tears! An affectionate manner insinuates itself into the heart, renders it soft and pliable, and disposes it to imbibe the sentiments and follow the impulse of the speaker."

We believe it is more for the want of this spirit than any thing else, that many ministers are so ineffective. Their learning is sufficient, their doctrine correct, their arguments logical, their notions of prudential means sound, and yet they have little success. As preachers they are not interesting, and they fail in every other department of ministerial duty, that is, they fail of doing it successfully. But let men of this class get "*warmed up*," let them stand before the people in the pulpit or the prayer meeting, with their eyes suffused with tears, and their hearts throbbing with emotion, and they speak with power. We think it safe, therefore, to say, if they would take as much pains to cultivate the right state of feeling as they do to make good sermons, they would never fail of interesting the people, or of bringing souls to Christ.

This state of heart is as necessary in the prayer, inquiry, or class meeting, as in the pulpit. In pastoral visiting it is indispensable. It is the rod

of God in the minister's hand, and will serve him on all occasions if he holds it fast. It will give interest and force to his performances, wisdom to his counsels and decisions, and success to his smallest endeavors.

5. It devolves upon ministers, also, to give *direction* to the *labors of the church*, and see that every member contributes his influence to this one grand object. The faithful endeavors of ministers to promote a revival of religion, are often counteracted by the infidelity and impiety of their own people. The misconduct of a church is more influential in keeping sinners from duty, than the good preaching of any minister can be in prompting them to it. From proud and impenitent churches, nothing can be expected but active opposition, unless their pastors can persuade them to "repent and do the first works."

But we refer particularly to churches of a better character, such as believe in lay responsibility, and are disposed to do something to facilitate the work. No one is in a situation to know how and where they can apply their energies in the best way, so well as the ever watchful and anxious preacher. He sees the susceptibilities of the various classes in community, and where the right influence lies to be exercised. It is a prominent part of his busi-

ness to study these things. They are of infinite importance to his work. It therefore devolves upon him to urge forward or restrain, to adopt this arrangement or the other, to bring the whole church up to their duty in the most skilful and energetic manner. Every church ought to be thus marshalled under an active and self-sacrificing pastor.

This may not be done by a public effort. It is sometimes necessary to see the members of the church separately. And it is an object of great importance to do so. If a minister will have a revival, as powerful and extensive as possible, he must not only get all the members of the church out of the way, but get them to doing the right thing to promote it. The secret of some ministers' success, lies in their knowing how to inspire and bring their members into active and efficient service. They seem to have a happy faculty for uniting and concentrating their energies on this one point, so that it becomes the all-absorbing topic. The result is, a mighty and wide-spread revival of religion. It cannot fail.

7. Ministers who will promote revivals must *pray much*. It is at the altar of prayer, in secret supplication that they are to obtain the "power from on high" to which we have referred. He only who

speaks much to God in prayer, will be able to speak properly to sinners about their salvation. He is the minister for a revival who is always in communion with his Maker. Whatever qualifications are desirable for this work, those which are obtained at the feet of Christ are indispensable.

8. We will only remark further, they must exercise implicit *faith in God*. Not merely that he is, or that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him, but that he will so co-operate with us by his spirit and providence, that we shall not labor in vain. Some ministers have so little faith, they have no courage to make an effort. They dare not venture off upon the divine promise at all. If the sinner is awakened, and the church is revived, they are glad of it; but they would not believe it till they saw it with their own eyes. And many are even worse than this — they positively believe the other way; that is, that God will not bless them.

Now, how can a minister with such feelings get up a protracted meeting, or invite sinners forward for prayers? He is unprepared for any such work. Should he make the attempt, it will be merely to gratify others, and under ordinary circumstances, will do more hurt than good. In our opinion, he will not accomplish much till he receives an increase of faith.

If ministers are called of God and sent forth to preach the gospel, with the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," it is not only their privilege to believe that they shall win sinners to Christ, but it is their solemn duty. And this is the faith that is to give them efficiency. It is "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." It has "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness made many strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Only let ministers go forth in the spirit and courage of this faith, grappling difficulties, and cheering on the armies of Israel to *certain victory* in the name of the Lord, and they shall see the triumphs of the cross wherever they go.

"The world cannot withstand
Its ancient conqueror ;
The world must sink beneath the hand
Which arms us for the war :
This is the victory,
Before our *faith* they fall,
Jesus hath died for you and me ;
Believe, and conquer all."

But here it may be asked, what is this faith ? I answer, once for all, it is simply to believe what

God has said, in its plain and unsophisticated meaning. That is, when we ask him for any good thing he has promised, or that it is consistent for him to bestow, believe that he heareth us, and proceed in our duty on that belief, as if it were a matter of positive knowledge. A little story of an African boy, related by one of our missionaries a few years since, illustrates it very beautifully. We have not the original at hand, and therefore, give the substance of it according to our best recollection.

A little African boy, taken from a slaver, and carried into Sierra Leone, was put under the care of one of the missionaries, and soon after converted. This kindled in his young heart an ardent desire for his parents, who were still in heathenish darkness, that they might be converted. Having been instructed that God would hear prayer, he remembered them at a throne of grace according to the best light he had. One day the missionary finding him at prayer, lingered to hear him. He thanked the Great Father in heaven for the circumstances which had led him there — that he had been stolen from home — that the British cruiser had been sent after him, and that he had been brought there, and been converted. He then prayed for his parents, that they might be stolen

too—that a British cruiser might take and bring them there, that they might be instructed and converted, so that they might all go to heaven together. When he closed, the missionary asked him what he was doing; to which he replied, that he had been praying to God that his parents might be stolen, &c., and be converted. “But,” said the missionary, “do you expect they will come?” “Why, yes,” he replied, “won’t they? I have asked the Great Father to bring them, and I suppose he will do so.” The conversation was soon turned. The next morning the little fellow was on the shore looking off upon the ocean with much interest. The missionary asked him what he was doing? “Looking to see if my father and mother are coming,” said he. The next morning he was there again watching the motion of the vessels, and so he continued, till one morning he returned, in great transport, leading his parents by the hand, saying, “The Great Father has heard my prayer; they have come, and I want you to teach them, that we may all go to heaven together.” They had been stolen, and shipped, and taken, and brought in, just according to the little fellow’s prayer.

Now, we do not pretend that there was sufficient ground for the faith here developed, or that the prayer was scriptural in itself. Our simple object

is to illustrate faith — to show that it is a humble confidence in God, and that in laboring for the conversion of sinners we should expect success, notwithstanding any obstacles that may oppose. As the little African went down upon the shore to look for the answer to his prayers, so should we look among sinners in the highest expectation of finding them awakened, agreeably to our prayers.

“Though in a bare and rugged way,
Through deserts, lonely wilds I stray,
Thy bounty shall my pains beguile,
The barren wilderness shall smile,
With sudden greens and herbage crowned,
And streams shall murmur all around.”

CHAPTER VI.

PRAYER, A MEANS OF PROMOTING REVIVALS.

WE have considered the duties of ministers in relation to this subject, and have now to call attention to the responsibility of others. Private Christians, of whatever grade, have an obligation to discharge, no less important than that of ministers. The object of this chapter is to notice their duty in reference to prayer.

1. They should pray *directly for a revival of religion*. We need not expect God to answer general prayers, in the bestowment of particular blessings. All the instructions of scripture indicate the necessity of having a specific object before the mind when we pray. Without such an object, it seems impossible to be properly affected. To have deep anxiety for many things at the same time, or faith that we shall receive them in answer to prayer is out of the question. The laws of mind forbid it. And without some degree of these elements our prayers are hardly entitled to the name.

Accordingly, those who pray for things in general, and nothing in particular, have no more expectation of receiving answers than if they were Atheists. They pray formally, and from habit, for such things as happen to occur at the time, and there the matter rests. If their prayers were to be answered they would be surprised. Such discourses at the throne of grace, while they do no good, operate to quiet a guilty conscience, and destroy all faith in the power of prayer.

Christians ought to pray specifically for the revival of God's work, as though it were the only object to be desired. We would have them still more particular. They should pray for individual sinners, and backsliders, taking them one by one, and spreading out their cases before the throne, as if they were the only sinners in the universe. To the same end, they should pray for their preacher, that he may speak the right word, and speak it with power.

2. They must pray for a revival with *intense importunity*. God may, and no doubt does, sometimes answer prayer, in which the desire does not come up to this description. But such is the nature of a revival, and such are the difficulties in the sinner's way in submitting to Christ, but little can be effected without more than ordinary ardor. Till Christians appreciate the dangerous condition

of sinners, they will not move, and when they do, they can but be in earnest. Besides, God means that we shall be importunate before he bestows the blessing. This is his economy, and it is for our good.

For an illustration of this point, take the case of Moses. When the Lord saw the idolatry of Israel, he said to Moses their leader, "Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, but I will make of thee a great nation." What did Moses say to this? Why, just what no heartless professor would think of saying. He "besought the Lord his God, and said, Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people? This people have sinned a great sin, yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Thus, throwing himself into the breach, like a prince, he prevailed. O, how intense must have been his love for the people, and his desire for their preservation! The idea of his personal acceptance, and honor, were powerless to restrain him. The salvation of Israel, and the interests of religion involved therein, were of more consequence than any personal advantage. Bold as such attempts to arrest justice may seem, God is infinitely pleased with them. That cold and sickly sentimentalism which is so fearful of interfering with the divine sover-

signty, that it dare not confidently ask any thing, is an offence. It distrusts the goodness of God at every step, and treats his promises as a lie. It is baptized infidelity, rather than reverence and humility, attributing to God secret purposes, at variance with his nature and his oath.

We have another instance of importunity in the case of Jacob, whose feelings were such that he continued in earnest prayer all night, and then obtained the blessing. This was in behalf of himself and his family, and under circumstances which might have suggested doubts; but he urged the promises, and "wrestled" with the angel, and would not let him go till he received assurance that he had prevailed. And how great was the "agony" of Jesus, when he "sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground?" Many professors of religion, we fear, know nothing about this Spirit. Their prayers are characterized neither by emotion, or importunity, and it is well if they do not regard such exercises as fanatical. But it is not the case with all. One brother, with whom we have often met, is frequently so anxious about sinners, that he can hardly eat or sleep. His feelings are often so intense, that he rises from his bed, and pours out his soul in an agony of prayer; and the church to which he belongs is with a constant revival. One such church-

member has more power with God, and with sinners, than many who "*wish well for the cause,*" but do nothing to promote it.

We are acquainted with the preceptress of a female academy, who is not ignorant of this matter. Not long since, as the school was approaching the close of a prosperous term, she began to think more particularly of the souls of her pupils who were about to leave. Her feelings became greatly excited. Their conversion to God was an object of immense interest, and was ever present with her, controlling her prayers, and conversation. She called the other teachers together, and entered upon appropriate measures, to secure the object she so deeply desired. The result was, nearly every scholar under her charge left the institution rejoicing in the Lord. And such has been her success in winning her pupils to Christ, parents now expect their daughters to graduate, not only accomplished in the arts and sciences, but happy in the religion of Christ. What a blessing it would be to the world, if all the teachers in our schools and colleges were possessed of such a spirit!

Mr. Finney is emphatic upon the subject. "I can name men in this State," he says, "of firm nerves, who stand high in character, who have been absolutely crushed with grief for the state of sinners. They have had an actual travail of soul for

sinner, till they have been as helpless as children." He names the case of a devoted woman, who "became anxious about sinners, and went to praying for them, and she prayed, and her distress increased, and she finally came to her minister, and talked with him, and asked him to appoint an anxious meeting, for she felt that one was needed. The minister put her off, for he felt nothing of it. The next week she came again, and besought him to appoint an anxious meeting; she knew there would be somebody to come, for she felt as if God was going to pour out his Spirit. He put her off again. And finally she said to him, 'If you do not appoint an anxious meeting, I shall die, for there is certainly going to be a revival.' The next Sabbath he appointed a meeting, and said, that if there were any who wished to converse with him about the salvation of their souls, he would meet them on such an evening. He did not know of one, but when he went to the place, to his astonishment he found a large number of inquirers."

Such feelings are consistent. Let the fond wife see her husband dying, and she is in agony. If the mother beholds her child in imminent danger, she shrieks and faints with concern for his safety. Every possible effort is made to prevent the dreaded calamity, however expensive and laborious. Why, then, may not Christians be distressed by

the discovery of the sinner's exposure to everlasting burnings ! If they have the spirit of Christ, how can they help feeling when they see the steps of their neighbors taking hold on hell ! It is impossible. Those professors whose love consists merely in the absence of malice and hatred, have reason to be alarmed about themselves. They are at "ease in Zion," and the woe of God is against them. They have neither love nor sympathy, nor faith, nor any other gospel quality, that entitles them to the name they bear.

3. Prayer, to be successful, must be offered in *faith*. In many cases, to exercise faith, is more difficult, because we have no assurance that it is consistent for God to bestow the thing we ask. Yet it being an object of interest to us, we cannot do justice to our feelings without praying for it. Faith must have a foundation to stand on, and that foundation should be the will of God, revealed. If the revelation be explicit, and fully authenticated, our faith may be unwavering ; if doubtful, it will be correspondingly weak. The revelation may be made by prophecy, or promise, or by the dispensations of Providence, or the Spirit. In the latter cases, they must be rather hopeful suggestions, than established revelations ; yet we have no doubt they are often so clear and impressive, as to amount to full assurance.

In regard to the conversion of sinners, the will of God is clearly revealed. He wills not the death of any man, but rather that all would turn from their evil ways and live. This is certain as his existence. He loved the world, and gave his Son to taste "death for *every man*." Here is ample ground for our faith. Though God will not convert the sinner till he repents, because it would be departing from essential principles, yet regarding it an object of infinite interest, he will order his Providence and Spirit in such a way as to call his attention to the subject. It is our duty to believe this, and to expect him to pour out his Spirit in *power*. We need not doubt in a single case, for he is no respecter of persons, and is able and mighty to awaken the most stupid.

4. Christians should *persevere* in prayer till they receive the answer. That our heavenly Father is willing to bestow the blessing at first, speaking abstractly, there is no reason to doubt. But he chooses to do it at the time which will be best for all concerned. Professors, generally, are not in a suitable frame of mind to be heard at once. They do not properly feel the importance of the blessing asked, and therefore ask amiss. They are too proud, or too unbelieving, or too cold; or they ask from wrong motives, and God leaves them to revolve the subject, and to pray

over it, till they are brought into a right state, and cannot be denied. A lady of our acquaintance, prayed for the conversion of her husband eight years, and yet he remained the same. But when her feelings arose to such a pitch, that she could scarcely live, the answer came, and he was converted. God may delay to answer our prayers for sinners, because there is not sufficient *union* among us. If they are not awakened, therefore, we should examine ourselves, and see if this is not the reason. The want of agreement is a great obstacle. Saith Jesus, "If two or three shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." This point being discussed one day at a protracted meeting in the town of D., a lady from Boston said to the preacher, "I suppose you believe what you have preached;" to which he assented. She then proposed that he, and another minister present, unite in prayer two successive days, that God would convert her brother, an influential man, and a violent enemy to the church, and bring him out to meeting and to Christ, promising that she would fast and pray for the same object. The proposition came fully up to the terms of the text, and was agreed to. The next afternoon, the man was at meeting, and sat

in the gallery. When the invitation was given for inquirers, he went down through the entry, walked up to the altar, and knelt. That evening he renounced his former creed, and was soon happy in the Lord. He has been a pillar in the church ever since, and a living demonstration of the power of united prayer.

Delay may be occasioned, too, by unfaithfulness to the sinner himself. While we are praying for him, we should be pressing him to duty in all practicable ways. It is vain to expect a harvest where we have sowed no seed. We must be able to say at the throne of grace, we have done what we can.

5. Prayer possessing these elements *must prevail*. The promises of God, and the history of his faithful people, furnish ample ground for the most unwavering confidence. When Elijah prayed for rain, it came ; and for fire, " then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." David waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto him, and heard his cry. When

his associates prayed for their per-

son, " I sought deliverance from their cruel
re " suddenly shined round about
the brightness of the sun ; and

he fell to the earth, trembling and astonished." So, when the disciples were praying at the house of Mary, for Peter, their preacher, who was in prison, "the angel of the Lord came upon him, and the light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands," and he went forth and informed the praying band "how the Lord had brought him out."

In all these cases, a specific object was asked and received. Of the amount of feeling, on the part of the suppliants, there can be no doubt. Life itself was at stake, and what was dearer still, the cause of God. Nothing short of agony was practicable under the circumstances, and God sent down the answer just at the right time, when his own cause would be best vindicated, and the greatest advantage ensue to his people.

Modern facts, to the same effect, are abundant. "In a certain town there had been no revival for many years; the church was nearly run out, the youth were all unconverted, and desolation reigned unbroken. There lived in a retired part of the town an aged man, a blacksmith by trade, and of so stammering a tongue, that it was painful to hear him speak. On one Friday his mind became greatly exercised about the state of the church, and the impenitent. His agony became so great,

that he was induced to lay by his work, lock up the shop, and spend the afternoon in prayer. He prevailed, and on the Sabbath called on the minister and desired him to appoint a conference meeting. It was so done, and more assembled than could be accommodated in the house. All was silent for a time, until one sinner broke out in tears and said, if any one could pray, he begged him to pray for him. Another followed, and another, and still another, until it was found that persons from every quarter of the town were under deep conviction. And what was remarkable, was, that they all dated their conviction at the hour when the old man was praying in his shop. A powerful revival followed." — *Finney's Lectures*.

. Carvoso, whose praise is in all the churches, speaking of the conversion of his family, says: "I had always prayed for my children; but now I grasped the promise with the hand of faith, and retired daily at special seasons to put the Lord to his word. I said nothing of what I felt, or did, to any one but the Searcher of hearts, with whom I wrestled in an agony of prayer." About one fortnight after, he was called from his work to pray with his daughter, a penitent at the feet of Jesus. His eldest son, a wicked youth, was converted about the same time. Of the younger

son, he says : " I laid hold by faith on the promise which I had when pleading for my other children. One day while I was wrestling with God in mighty prayer for him, these words were applied with power to my mind, ' There shall not a hoof be left behind.' I came to him on one occasion, [soon after,] with my heart deeply affected, and asked him if it was not time for him to enter upon a life of religion. I told him with tears, that I then felt that my body was failing, and that if any thing would distress my mind in a dying hour, it would be the thought of closing my eyes in death before I saw him converted to God. This effort the Lord was pleased to bless, and he soon obtained the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins."

A dull and careless way of praying for our friends will avail nothing. It may conceal hypocrisy, or strengthen deception concerning our own piety, but it will not move God, nor convert a single soul. Our friends know that we are not in earnest, and they care little for it. But let us take hold of the matter in a spirit corresponding to the magnitude of the object to be secured, and there will be a movement. A statement made by a layman in our hearing a few years since, will illustrate this point. He was a respectable gentleman, and stood well as a Christian; but his

children were all unconverted. He said, the inquiry one day occurred to him, "What am I doing for the conversion of my children?" He thought the matter over, and concluded he had done very little. Communicating these reflections to his companion, he proposed that they should set apart a day for solemn fasting and prayer, that their children might be saved. It was approved. When the day arrived, and the children were seated for prayers, he acknowledged to them his former indifference, and informed them of the solemn purpose he and their mother had made, and were that day going to execute. They listened to the whole with a smile, and went to their employment wild and careless. The day passed. Another came, and was spent in the same manner. The children remained unmoved. The third day arrived, and was consecrated as the two preceding. Towards night, one of the sons came home, where his parents were engaged in prayer, and with a broken heart desired them to pray for him, confessing that he had had no peace since he heard of their purpose. Soon another came in like manner, and then a daughter, I think, and all were happily converted to God.

Parents cannot do better than to commence this work by confessing their own faults to their children, and to each other. It breaks down their

souls, and gives the children assurance that they are sincere, and mean to do as they propose. If all careless parents would do this, and call upon God as they ought, they would very soon find that their children are not so hard but they may be made to cry for mercy. The same is true also of wives and husbands. If instead of complaining of the terrible hardness of their unconverted companions, they would take some suitable occasion to confess their own hardness, and beg pardon for living before them at such a poor dying rate, and thus begin to live for God, salvation would come to their houses. But it is an affecting truth, that in many instances, the greatest obstacle to the conversion of children, is found in their parents. If we could place them under better influences, they would doubtless become Christians. And some husbands and wives do more to keep their companions from Christ, than all the evil spirits in the universe, and will prove their eternal ruin, if they persist in their present course.

Prayer is mighty to remove difficulties out of the way of revivals. The cases of Herod, and Peter, and Saul, are to the point, as are many others of more recent occurrence. In a certain village there was an infidel physician, who took it upon him to oppose a revival in the place where

he lived. So he went round from tavern to store, and from patient to patient, ridiculing it, saying, that when all the nervous and weak-minded were brought in, it would stop. The church regarded him as the greatest obstacle to the work, and being assembled, one proposed to try the strength of prayer. It was promptly agreed to, and they tarried all night for that purpose. A little past midnight, the preacher, who had retired, was aroused by a rap at his bedroom window, and informed that the doctor was dying, and desired to see him immediately. He went, suspecting what the source of the trouble might be, and on examining the case, told the doctor his disease was that of the heart. The doctor confessed that was his exact condition, and desired he would pray for him. The result was the doctor's happy conversion to God, and hearty co-operation in advancing the work he had opposed.

The history of the church furnishes many such facts, yet how slow of faith the mass of Christians are! We cannot forbear to record one more which is directly in point. "A pious man in the western part of New York was sick with a consumption. He was a poor man, and sick for years. An unconverted merchant in the place, had a kind heart, and used to send him now and then some things for his comfort, or for his family.

He felt grateful for the kindness, but could make no return, as he wanted to. At length, he determined that the best return he could make, would be to pray for his salvation. He began to pray, and his soul kindled, and he got hold of God. There was no revival, but by and by, to the astonishment of every body, this merchant came right out on the Lord's side. The fire kindled all over the place, and a powerful revival followed, and multitudes were converted.

"This poor man lingered in this way for several years, and died. After his death, I visited the place, and his widow put into my hands his diary. Among other things, he says in his diary, 'I am acquainted with about thirty ministers and churches.' He then goes on to set apart certain hours in the day and week to pray for each of these ministers and churches, and also certain seasons for praying for different missionary stations. Then followed, under different dates, such facts as these: 'To-day,' naming the date, 'I have been enabled to offer what I call the prayer of faith for the outpouring of the Spirit on — church, and I trust in God there will soon be a revival there.' Under another date: 'I have to-day been able to offer what I call the prayer of faith, for such a church, and trust there will soon be a revival there.' Thus he had gone over a great

grossed with subordinate objects, such as educational, or missionary, or other benevolent interests, they have little thought or feeling about revivals.

We say, then, in order to pray as we ought, the mind must be fixed upon a revival as the paramount object, and every other interest be made subordinate. It is astonishing that Christians can be diverted from this point, as many are. We have known some to become so deeply absorbed with the enjoyments of religion, as almost to lose sight of the sinner. And when they have been called upon to pray for inquirers, have shown their deadness to the subject by wandering off upon other matters. Some good people are so taken up with Sabbath schools, and Bible classes, or monthly concerts, *in themselves*, and not as means of promoting a revival, that the conversion of sinners is a secondary consideration. While this is the case with us, it matters not how important the work in which we are particularly engaged, we are not prepared to pray effectively for a revival.

It is necessary, too, that we have satisfactory evidence of our own acceptance with God. Doubts here will paralyze every effort. We should enjoy the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are the children of God. Besides, we need

the Spirit to help our infirmities, according to the Scriptures: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." It is the Spirit that begetteth the intense desires of which we have spoken. We say farther, in regard to obtaining these qualifications, we must renounce every sin. The professor who indulges in any known sin, or in any thing which he fears is sin, can have no boldness at the throne of grace. Every evil way must be abandoned, vanity, pride, light and trifling conversation, the telling of foolish and laughable stories, and all else which would be inconsistent, if God were visibly present, to hear and see what is done. Any act or emotion which does violence to our conscience, whatever its nature, enfeebles our faith. O, how many render themselves useless to the cause of Christ, and even worse, by what are called little sins! For the merest indulgence, they abandon the pleasure of communion with God, and sit down under his frown, self-degraded and reproached.

It should also be remarked, every known duty must be performed. We may sin negatively, as well as positively, and the result will be the same. He must elect to take up his cross and follow

Christ, will have no confidence to pray either for himself or others. He cannot escape the conviction, that it is his first business to repent, and will pray but poorly, if he prays at all. We must pray, also, for a right state of heart, that we may see the condition of sinners, and feel for them; and that we may have such views of the plan of salvation, as will enable us to pray for them in faith. We should pray much, pray at every breath, pray without ceasing. This may seem difficult at first; but when the mind becomes settled on being for God alone, it will not only be practicable, but delightful.

It is beneficial to commence operations with sinners themselves. Sometimes, when there has been little interest, a single interview with a beloved sinner has excited the heart to a storm of holy sympathy. God may hold Christians to a cross-bearing course, as a condition of their receiving a right state of mind. If they have the least apprehension that it is their duty to take this course, we recommend to them not to confer with flesh and blood. Nothing can be lost, everything may be gained.

It may be useful, also, to read books showing the importance of revivals, and our duty in reference to them. This means has often stirred the coldest hearts, and begotten great importunity in

prayer. The heart is naturally prompted in the same direction, by attending revival meetings, hearing revival preaching, and prayers. This is one advantage of visiting places where revivals are in progress. Ministers have often become so interested in this way, as to feel overwhelming concern for their own people, and have labored with so much spirit under the new impulse, as to awaken attention immediately. If Christians will have a spirit of prayer for a revival, they should put themselves in the way of those who already have it.

CHAPTER VII.

OTHER MEANS OF PROMOTING REVIVALS.

THE object of prayer is to move God, (we speak reverently,) not to change him. With him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The change is all with us. What it may not be proper for him to do while we are prayerless, or pray only in form, may be obligatory upon him, by his promise, when we pray in faith. Indeed, it must be so, or the success of prayer depends on the divine mutation, which is impossible.

The efforts of which we are now to speak, are designed to move the sinner toward God, and bring him within the range of the promises. These are as necessary as prayer, and form a part of that perfect system of salvation revealed in the Bible. When these two classes of means are rightly used they can hardly fail of success; whereas, either employed alone may prove abortive.

1. The first particular to which we would direct attention, is *Christian conversation*. The duty of

ministers in this matter has been discussed in another chapter. We are not one of those who believe the subject so sacred, or so difficult, that the laity may not touch it. They have an important duty to discharge to their associates, and others, over whom they have influence, that cannot be superceded by the ministry, however faithful. It is impossible for the minister to see, and suitably converse with all the people under his supervision. Some will avoid him, and others are so occupied as to afford him no opportunity to address them, as would be desirable. But were they all accessible, he might not be the best man to approach them. A general timidity of ministers, or a particular prejudice against him, may frustrate his good intentions, where another person might succeed. It is, therefore, the duty of Christians of every rank in society, to *prepare* themselves to converse with all within their circle of influence, about their salvation. They ought to read the Bible, and other appropriate books, and think, and pray earnestly, in reference to the work. The better they understand the nature of religion, its influences and obligations, the objections, and other hinderances it has to encounter, the more effective will be their endeavors. All such conversation should be solemn. Religion is a solemn

subject. Every word should be uttered as in the presence of God, and the destinies of eternity.

“ No room for mirth or trifling here,
For worldly hope or worldly fear,
If life so soon is gone;
If now the judge is at the door,
And all mankind must stand before
The inexorable throne.”

It should be *personal, and directly to the point*. There is a strong tendency among Christians to wander. This arises from fear of reproof, or of giving offence, or, it may be the result of the hearers ingenuity in turning the conversation to another person or subject. But we must guard against this tendency, and all attempts to divert our attention; and hold the sinner to close examination. We want to know just where he is, and if we can elicit from him an honest confession of his real state, it will do him more good than a years preaching. He is then committed, and the thought of an interview so solemn and heart-searching will not soon leave him.

Much depends on the manner of introducing the subject. A forced, unnatural, or coarse introduction of it, is not the most encouraging, though preferable to its entire neglect. We are less liable to open hostility where we make the subject to grow out of other conversation. And to a spiritual

mind, with which almost every topic is suggestive of God and good things, this is not difficult. The attraction for the spiritual is so strong, conversation, however commenced, naturally runs in this direction. We will not say, that persons of this character may not err. To err is human. But it is our firm conviction, their errors will be less frequent and gross ; and like spots in the sun, will be obscured by the surrounding brightness. The wisdom which the Holy Ghost teacheth is decidedly more safe here, than the profoundest reasonings of the carnal mind. But whether suitably alive to God or otherwise, great care should be taken to introduce the subject in such a manner as not to frustrate our own purposes.

Care is necessary, also, as to the *time* of doing it. "There is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven." Persons are not always in an eligible mood to be advised on any subject, much less on the subject of religion. When pressed with business, or excited with disappointment or abuse, or intoxicated with foolish amusements, they are not in a condition to attend to what may be said. An opportunity must be sought when they are more at leisure, and reflective. Particularly, should we seize upon those providential occasions which seem to compel men to be serious, and to regard religion as the para-

mount interest. The most buoyant and reckless spirits have times of depression, and solemn review, when they really desire the counsels and prayers of the pious. To detect and improve such occasions should be our constant aim.

Great errors are sometimes committed in broaching this subject before improper company. Many who are willing to converse on it, and even desirous to do so, would be offended should they be forced to it in certain company. There is no condition so favorable for reaching the honest heart, as that of entire seclusion. One who is reserved and cold, and, perhaps, crusty in the presence of his wife, children, or parents, taken alone, may be interested. Pride operates in these circumstances with much less power, and the results are more attention to what is said, and a freer expression of the sentiments of the heart. But let nothing I have said be construed adversely to the most studied and formal plan for doing this work under some circumstances. There are times, no doubt, when it becomes the duty of Christians to call upon their neighbors, avowing it to be their object to win them to Christ. Such efforts have been admirably successful. The sinner who has treated incidental allusions as matters of course, and of little consequence, has yielded to the formal onset, and been converted.

The appropriateness and power of these means, are illustrated by the operations of a converted atheist. Soon after his conversion, though he had heard nothing of any such acts in others, he made "out a list of all his old associates then living within reach of his influence. For the conversion of these he determined to labor as he had opportunity, and pray daily. On his list were *one hundred and sixteen* names, among whom were skeptics, drunkards, and other individuals as little likely to be reached by Christian influence as any other men in the region. Within two years from the period of the old man's conversion, *one hundred* of these individuals had made a profession of religion.

When Christians have been active and in earnest, God has never failed to bless their efforts. We call to mind a lay brother who has distinguished himself in this respect. He once resolved at the commencement of the year, not to let a day of the year pass without conversing with some *one*, at least, about his soul's salvation. He kept his pledge, though at the expense of some cross-bearing, and other little inconveniences. But eternity will show that he did not labor in vain. We will only say of him now, as he is still in the field, he has probably brought more sinners to Christ than most ministers of the gospel, though not possessed

of intellectual endowments above many others, and always engaged in the perplexing duties of city business.

Another layman, a young convert of our acquaintance would seize every leisure moment to go from tavern to tavern, and from shop to shop, to tell his old associates what God had done for his soul, and invite them to "taste and see that the Lord is good." Many were drawn to the house of prayer by his influence. We have often seen him filling up his pew with strangers he had invited to come, and otherwise laboring for their conversion. O, if all Christians would engage in this business with a full heart, how gloriously would the work spread and prevail! This is what we want. God is ready, the Holy Spirit strives, and the way is open; but alas, for our infidelity!

2. It is not among the least important means of converting men, to induce them to attend upon the *ministry of the word*. Preaching the gospel is of divine appointment, to bring sinners to Christ. To doubt its adaptation to this end, is to impeach the wisdom of God, and deny the facts of his Providence. It is an eternal truth that the word of the Lord is "quick and powerful." Many who went to the house of prayer skeptical, and even malicious, have been so affected by it, as to repent and be converted. It enters into the soul and

spirit of men beyond our largest apprehensions; but the effect of it is often concealed from human view by a studied effort. Sinners are ashamed of Christ, and affect to be infidel, when in fact they "believe and tremble." Hold them to the faithful ministration of the gospel, and it is strongly probable they will yield to its authority and be saved. It seems to us, therefore, that it is the duty of every Christian to exert himself to the utmost to bring sinners under the sound of the gospel, and to do it uniformly and perseveringly, as we know not which will prosper, this or that."

Some may object that the benefit of the sinner's attending upon public worship is dependent on the *motives* with which he does it, and, therefore, it is useless, unless he is desirous of good. But this is a mistake. Many who have been to the house of prayer to trifle, have returned to pray. We are told of a certain libertine, of a most abandoned character, who happened one day to stroll into a church, when he heard the fifth chapter of Genesis read — importing, that so lived such and such persons, and yet the conclusion was, "they died." Enos lived 905 years, and he died; Seth 912, and he died; Methuselah 969, and *he died*. The frequent repetition of the words, "he died," notwithstanding the great length of years they lived, struck him so deeply with the thought of death

and eternity, that through divine grace he became a most exemplary Christian.

The conversion of Rev. Mr. M., who was educated for the bar, arose from the following circumstance. He was desired one evening, by some of his companions who were with him at a coffee-house, to go and hear Mr. John Wesley, who, they were told, was to preach in the neighborhood, and then to return and exhibit his *nonsensæ* and *discourse* for their entertainment. He went with that intention; and just as he entered the place, Mr. Wesley named as his text, "Prepare to meet thy God," with a solemnity of accent which struck him, and which inspired a seriousness that increased as the good man proceeded in exhorting his hearers to repentance. He returned to the coffee-room, and was asked by his acquaintances "if he had taken off the old Methodist." To which he answered, "*No gentlemen, but he has taken me off;*" and from that time, he left their company altogether, and in future associated with serious people, and became himself a serious character.

Thus it was, also, with the officers who went to hear Jesus, with a view to take him. They returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, saying, "Never man spake like this man." It is well to get the sinner to the house of prayer, whatever

his motives. God may meet him as he does not expect. O Christian, don't forget your duty in this respect! Set the example, and exert all the influence you can command, to have the gospel heard.

Perhaps we speak with more emphasis here than we should do under other circumstances. But the writer can never forget the urgency with which he was invited by his host to hear the gospel in a place and style, to which he was an entire stranger. The reluctance, and prejudice, and hypercriticism, with which he took his seat, in a miserable old house of worship, are equally fresh to his recollection. But the first sermon, under God, laid the foundation for all he now is religiously, or hopes to be. Had it not been for that invitation, had not that invitation been repeated, he had never entered that sacred place, or heard that saving sermon. Had each believer persuaded one sinner to the house of God that Sabbath, some might have been in heaven to-day, who are now wailing in hell. Solemn thought! Yet, the statement is probably true in regard to every Sabbath since the great revival at Jerusalem.

But, though this is the easiest of Christian duties, professors of religion in general, have not faith enough to do it. They seem to regard
ing as a mere ceremony, designed to please,

rather than profit, and feel little interest in having it heard. If they looked upon sinners as God's enemies, and ministers as his ambassadors, sent forth to persuade them to be reconciled to him ; and considered life and death involved in the enterprise, it seems rational to infer, they would be interested in bringing the parties face to face. But we fear many do not believe it. They are mere professors, living "without God," though they cherish a hope in his mercy. Some, however, have another spirit, and take a different course. They love the gospel, they love sinners, too, and not only bring the gospel near to them, but take all pains to bring them under its power. Accordingly, we often find them taking the place and doing the work of servants, and others confined by care, that they may hear and be saved. We see them *walking* to the house of God, too, that others may *ride*, who could not, or would not walk. I am acquainted with several churches in which brethren have furnished themselves with spacious wagons, for the purpose of conveying their neighbors to meetings on the Sabbath, and other times. They do it cheerfully, and, we trust, for the purest purpose. We find these same individuals filling up their pews with invited guests, and standing up themselves, if necessary, during

the whole service. I heard one brother remark that he had not occupied his own pew but once in three months. But he did not complain ; he was glad to have it filled by sinners, though it had turned him out of doors. How unlike is this, to that selfishness which rides and sits alone, and sneers at being interrupted for a favor. It is noble, Godlike ! and the Lord owns it. We may challenge the world to produce a church, in which the practice is cherished, that does not prosper. Such little endeavors carry conviction with them, and never fail of good results. If our infant churches would put this means into efficient operation, the "little one would soon become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation."

Little Samuel was a model of a boy, from whose example we may learn something of the enterprise with which we should engage in this work. "He always made it a practice to invite every child he met, who did not belong to a Sunday school, to attend. He one day found a little boy who was so lame that he could not walk, and asked him if he would not be glad to attend the Sunday school. The boy replied, 'Yes: but I am so lame I cannot walk; my father is dead, my brother is gone to sea, and I have nobody to carry me.' 'O, I will carry you,' said Samuel; 'I will come for you every Sabbath, and bring

you home again. I should *like* to do it. I'll carry you on my *back*; you are not very heavy, and I had *a great deal rather do it than not.*' And every Sabbath morning, Samuel was seen carrying the lame boy on his back to the school." Let all Christians be as thoughtful, and take as much pains to bring sinners under the sound of the gospel, and a new face would come over the affairs of the church immediately.

3. A similar effort to *bring sinners into inquiry, prayer, class, and other religious meetings*, is hardly less important, and especially when they seem seriously affected. Many who have failed to be much impressed under the ministry of the word, have been arrested by the broken accents of exhortation and experience. Others have been aroused by seeing the tears, and hearing the cries of the mourner. And others still, by other events accompanying such occasions. There is great encouragement, therefore, to induce unawakened sinners to attend upon these means. In relation to persons seriously affected, this duty cannot be urged with too much emphasis. We are persuaded there are more persons of this character in every community than is generally supposed; and we fear they receive less attention than would be for their good. Because they have been light and trifling in their general spirit, or have professed

to be infidels, or Universalists in sentiment, we are rather disposed to pass them by as though they are not subject to the common convictions of humanity. But this is an error. They have times of deep and solemn consideration — times when they desire the prayers and counsels of the pious. These occasions should be improved. If they were, we believe many would be converted who still live in sin.

The utility of this measure is fully demonstrated by experiment. Who that has read the interesting biography of Carvosso, has not been convinced of its practical importance in carrying on the work of God. His first effort, after conversing with sinners, was to get them to his class, where they were urged to accept Christ and be saved. And few only who were induced to frequent that meeting, failed of the grace of God. We are acquainted with some leaders who imitate his example. They keep an eye out in search of the sinner, and their classes are scenes of revival continually. Scarce a week passes without more or less inquirers coming before them for prayers. And it is because they seek to have it so. One class of eighteen members commenced operations by agreeing each to bring in one unconverted person. In six months that class was increased by conversions to *forty* members. But how little is generally

done in this way? O, that every class member might realize his power, and the responsibility of his station!

4. *Sabbath schools* may be highly conducive to this great work. They bring the subject of religion directly to view, so that not to speak of it would be considered irregular. No one can be offended at plain dealing here, because the business of the occasion is personal and religious. This furnishes teachers a rare opportunity to bring their pupils to Christ. But as with other means, so with this; it must be improved with direct reference to immediate results, to the conversion of the soul, where the pupils are of suitable age, or it will avail little. If we have no faith in the object, or neglect to come directly to the point, and confine our instructions to mere abstract principles, our labor will be comparatively vain. Teachers should make the conversion of their pupils the leading object. All their instructions ought to be of such a character, and so applied as to contribute to it. Some teachers take this course, and it is a remarkable fact, that they have full classes, and in most cases succeed in bringing them all to believe unto salvation. Christians who neglect the Sabbath school, know not what they do, or they are criminally at fault. The revivals of several years last past have been intimately connected with these means. In nu-

merous instances where preaching has seemed ineffectual, they have succeeded in the salvation of many.

5. The circulation of Bibles, tracts, and other good books, should not be overlooked. A single tract has been the means of awakening some who have withstood all other instrumentalities for many years. So has a book, or paragraph, to which prayerful attention has been solicited.

Where there is a mind for the work, various prudential expedients will naturally be suggested. Thus, Dr. Chalmers, feeling deeply concerned for his daughter, on hearing Dr. Fletcher address the children of Glasgow, invited him to breakfast at his house, the next morning. "In the morning, after breakfast and family worship, Dr. Chalmers addressed Dr. Fletcher, thus: 'Sir, it was not an invitation founded on a mere compliment that I gave you last evening, to meet with me this morning; nor was it to enjoy your conversation. I have a daughter, who appears still to have no part or lot with the people of God. If there be any human instrumentality, under God, which can impress her mind, I believe it must be wielded by yourself. I will call her in, and while you are speaking to her, *an agonized father will be speaking to his God.*'" The project was successful.

Christians have many opportunities to do good,

but do not always perceive, much less improve them. Those only who set themselves about the work, as a leading object of life, are *wise* to win souls. Their minds are ever open to divine suggestions, and ever prompt in carrying them into effect. Let us make the conversion of sinners our business, and all necessary occasions will be added.

But there is another department of effort in this connection, which should not pass unnoticed. We refer to the treatment of awakened sinners. The position to which they must come in order to be saved, has been stated in another place. But there is much darkness in the instructions which they sometimes receive. One class of counselors, acting from a sickly sympathy, comfort them with falsehood. They represent sin, and repentance to be of less consequence than they really are, and persuade them to believe they are converted before they have suitably humbled themselves. Instead of convincing them of sin, and breaking them down before God, under a painful sense of guilt, and unworthiness of the least of divine mercies, and thus preparing them to apprehend Christ, and appreciate his interposition in their behalf, they heal them "slightly." We believe many false professors are made in this way, who, under different instructions, might have

been soundly converted. The truth is, it is worse than in vain to point the sinner to the mercy of God, or the power of Christ, till he is humbled. He needs first to feel that he is a sinner, that he is justly condemned, and that if he were to be debarred from heaven for ever, it would be no more than he deserves. God means he shall see this, that he may look to Christ as his only dependence for salvation, and attribute the work, when accomplished, to its proper source. He needs to die indeed unto himself, to self-righteousness, pride, personal importance, popularity, the good or bad opinions of others, that he may live unto Christ. Until he gets such a discovery of himself as elicits the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he cannot be saved, though he may be deceived.

Others err in the opposite direction. They represent sin to be so odious it can hardly be forgiven, and that it is a matter of great uncertainty whether God will receive the sinner, after all he can do. They encourage the idea that penitents must feel themselves to be the greatest sinners in the world, and when they feel enough for all practical purposes, they harass them with various questions about their *motives*. The legitimate result of such training is to discourage effort, and finally create despair. It is based on a false assumption,

viz. : that if God has begun a good work in the inquirer's heart, he will inevitably carry it on to perfection, whatever difficulties may intercept it. This kind of hypercriticism is, therefore, considered a grand measure, because it cannot hinder God ; and if he is not in the work, it will keep the sinner from entertaining a false hope. Thus, many who are awakened and brought near the kingdom of God, are driven back, or plunged into the vortex of religious despair. This was a common occurrence in the great revival, a century ago. The cause was much injured by the multiplied instances of insanity brought about by such instructions. But as light has increased, and better views prevailed, they have been less frequent.

Now, both these extremes should be carefully avoided. While we strive to humble the sinner, and make him *feel* his danger and guilt, we must not fail to show that his feelings, however painful, are no atonement for sin ; that their only object is to make him *act* in obedience to God, and seek salvation by the cross. He must be impressed, too, that sinner as he may be, ample provision is made for his salvation ; that God is infinitely disposed to save him, and will do so when he comes in the right way. Not with so much distress, but with submission to his requirements, renouncing

every thing supposed to be offensive in his sight. He must not be allowed to doubt the disposition of God in this respect. All uncertainty on the point should be banished, or he will seek in vain. Such instructions are both encouraging and safe. They make sound conversions, and many of them.

We suggest, also, the importance of encouraging the idea of a *thorough work*, and the clearest evidence of its accomplishment. If inquirers are ready to believe themselves converted on slight grounds, they will be greatly liable to deception. They ought to be discouraged from believing it, in general, till they have clear evidence. If they begin in doubt, and darkness, their career will be irregular and unsatisfactory. Give them the tests of conversation, and pray for them, but it is usually best to let them find out that they are converted by their own experience. If they have either the witness or the fruits of the Spirit, they will need no one to tell them they are converted. These evidences are unequivocal. They give peace and joy the world cannot afford. And when the mourner feels them springing up in his heart, he will rejoice and long to tell what the Lord has done for his soul. But till then, let him seek on, though he may have some light, and feel some hope. He will thank God, and his *spir-
ides*, if they keep him at the mercy seat

seeking, till he *knows* he has passed from death unto life. He had better go forward for prayers one hundred times more than is positively necessary, than one less. If we must err, it is well to err on the safe side.

The importance of this point cannot be too highly estimated. It not only involves the happiness and safety of inquirers themselves, but the interests of revivals and the church of Christ. Failures in finding the sought pearl, and spurious professions, are sources of great mortification and discouragement, whereas, sound conversions strengthen confidence, and nerve Christian enterprise for still greater achievements.

CHAPTER VIII.

OBSTRUCTIONS TO REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

IF revivals are miracles, entirely dependent on the will of God, and wholly independent of human agency, as some have supposed, the title of this chapter is clearly heretical. For, to Omnipotence there can be no obstruction. "Some have talked very foolishly on this subject, [says Mr. Finney,] as if nothing could injure a genuine revival. They say, 'If your revival is a work of God, it cannot be stopped; can any created being stop God?' Now, I ask if this is common sense? Formerly, it used to be the established belief that a revival could not be stopped, because it was the work of God. And so they supposed it would go on, whatever might be done to hinder it, in the church or out of it. But the farmer might just as well reason so, and think he could go and cut down his wheat and not hurt the crop, because it is God that makes grain grow. A revival is the work of God, and so is a crop of wheat; and God is as

much dependent on the use of means in one case as the other. And, therefore, a revival is as liable to be injured as a wheat field."

This is a rational view of the subject. It places responsibility where it belongs, and "justifies the ways of God with men." Revivals of religion may be hindered and stopped, and doubtless have been in thousands of instances. We will mention a few things which operate as obstructions.

1. The *apostasy of Christians* is one of the most prominent. Professors of religion are regarded as the representatives of Christ—the light of the world. They claim to have been let into the secrets of heaven, and to have knowledge, and experience of sacred things, to which others are strangers. And where they are real Christians, their claims are well founded. Hence, when they come out and deny the faith, declaring that they have tried religion for themselves, and found nothing good in it, they exert great influence on others, to destroy their confidence, and deter them from attending to its duties. Sinners rely more upon living witnesses, than upon the Word of God. And those who testify in agreement with their infidel wishes, seem to enjoy a larger portion of their esteem than any others. It is for this reason that backsliders become so injurious to them. If they do not destroy their

faith in the *reality* of religion, they furnish what appears a strong apology for the neglect of it. "If such persons," says the sinner, "have proved religion false, or have found its duties impracticable, why should I undertake it?" Thus he fortifies himself against God, on pretence of avoiding fanaticism, if religion be a farce, and of not disgracing it by a fruitless attempt at its duties and enjoyment, if it be a reality.

Besides, backsliders furnish one of the most formidable sources of discouragement to revival effort. To see those we have persuaded to come out from the world and take up the cross, those who profess to have obtained remission of sins, and enjoy the peace of God, surpassing all that is pleasurable beneath the sun, renounce Christ, and turn back to sin, is exceedingly paralysing to Christian enterprise. Persecution, even unto death, is not equal to it. It is, in the first place, extremely mortifying, because it looks so much like defeat; and, then if such persons and professions turn out to be so hollow and worthless, who or what can we trust? To confide in others, when so many have betrayed us, is to expose ourselves to ridicule. And to labor for their conversion, will be to run the hazard of another painful disappointment. Therefore, unless Christians resolutely determine to do their duty, and win all

they possibly can to Christ, though they were all to backslide, they will be disheartened, and entirely leave the work, or become so modified in their feelings and operations, as to be inefficient. This is the proper course. *We* should not renounce Christ because others have. Though Judas betrays, and Peter denies him, it is our duty to follow and obey to the last. And we shall have our reward, not according as the converts hold out, but according to our fidelity, and the promise of God. Besides, all will not backslide. Many will persevere and be saved, so that in the end, those who push forward the cause and bring sinners to Christ, will gather some fruit unto life eternal.

But what can we say of backsliders? Are they not traitors to Christ? Did they not vow eternal service to him? And now, behold! they "stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seats of the scornful." To the sinner, they practically say, religion is a delusion. They throw themselves across his path, a religious *wreck*, to warn him not to seek heaven by a course of piety. Terrible work! It may not all be designed, but it is none the less ungrateful or ruinous. Better for them had they never been born.

2. The *general indifference* of professing Christians to the work, is another powerful obstruction. There are a few members in almost every church,

who want a revival, and are disposed to live for it. They sometimes wonder that their prayers are not heard, and that sinners are not converted. But they need not. The truth is, the popular influence of the church is against them. Those who are engaged in the work are less in number, and have less influence, than those who stand in the way, and do nothing. Sinners hear their prayers and exhortations, or sermons, and would be excited to do something, but seeing how perfectly cool and unconcerned the great mass of the church is, they conclude it is not best to be alarmed. The influence of such members, especially where they are the more wealthy and influential, is death to a revival. If one breaks out, they will put it down, and yet say nothing against it. Their inactivity and want of sympathy are enough. The Christian feels it freezing up his faith like an iceberg, and it operates upon the inquirer to moderate his ardor below the working point. Ministers and Christians who have agonized for revival under these circumstances, know what I mean, and they know it is true. They have seen the work stopped short, by just such a cold and stupifying process.

3. *The want of faith and courage* in those who interested in the work, is another obstacle.
- by the indifference of brethren, and other

difficulties which arise, to have too much influence upon them. Where they ought to say, "We are well able to go up and possess the land," they see giants in the way, and are afraid. So long, therefore, as a part of the church remains on the back ground, or the devil succeeds in keeping up a quarrel between members, so long they are disheartened, and will accomplish little. This is a great evil. Suppose Nehemiah had yielded to discouragements of this sort, what would have become of the temple and walls of Jerusalem? But no, the persecutions and flatteries of his enemies, the unbelief and timidity of his friends, the "rubbish in the way," and the magnitude of the work, only nerved him to greater courage and faith in God. When laughed to scorn, and charged with various wicked designs, instead of sinking under the accumulating weight of opposition, he shouted to the little band of his friends, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore, we, his servants, will arise and build."

This is the courage we need, to maintain a revival. There are so many to oppose it without, and so many to prophesy and live against it within, it will not do to be faint-hearted. We must look far away from the thousand and one contingencies upon which it is supposed to depend, relying alone

upon God to succeed our efforts. There is a kind of conditional faith, on such occasions, which we regard as a great nuisance. It is just as much worse than open and positive unbelief, as it claims to be more religious. It conditions success on so many improbabilities, we may fully embrace it, and yet be entirely unbelieving and despondent. Its language is somewhat like this : "If the church were all engaged in the work, and the people would only come to meeting, &c., we should prosper." The simple English of it is, "These things are not so, and, therefore, we shall have no revival; or the revival will stop." Professors, who talk in this way, had better say nothing. Their first business should be to disentangle themselves from so many circumstances, and obtain faith in *God*, that embraces the end in spite of them. It is the want of this faith and courage, that often keeps ministers from inviting sinners forward for prayers. They are so fearful of a failure, or of the speech of people, they don't dare to move.

4. A revival is often broken up *by the church believing it is going to stop*. Mr. Finney well remarks, "The church are instruments with which God carries on his work, and they are to work in it voluntarily, and with their hearts. Nothing is
 > fatal to a revival than for its friends to pre-

dict that it is going to stop. No matter what the *enemies* of the work may say about it, predicting that it will all run out and come to nothing, and the like, they cannot stop it in this way. But the friends must labor and pray in faith to carry it on. If they lose their faith, it will stop, of course. Whenever the friends of revivals begin to prophesy that the revival is going to stop, they should instantly be rebuked in the name of the Lord. If the idea once begins to prevail, and you cannot counteract it, and root it out, the revival will infallibly cease; for it is indispensable to the work, that Christians should labor and pray in *faith* to promote it; and it is a contradiction to say that they can labor in faith for its continuance, while they believe it is about to cease."

In view of these considerations, the writer has found it necessary, in all the revivals in which he has been engaged, to take special pains to keep up the *faith* of the church. The moment that has begun to flag, the work has declined, and has been prevented from utterly dying out, only by a renewal of faith. If ministers would pay more attention to this point, they would be able to protract revivals to much greater extent than has been usual.

5. We heartily concur with the able author last quoted, in saying, also, "A revival will

cease when Christians consent that it should cease. Sometimes Christians see that the revival is in danger of ceasing, and that if something effectual is not done, it will come to a stand. If this fact distresses them, and drives them to prayer and to fresh efforts, the work will not cease. When Christians love the work of God and the salvation of souls so well that they are distressed at the mere apprehension of decline, it will drive them to an agony of prayer and effort. If it does not, if they see the danger, and do not try to avert it, or renew the work, *they CONSENT THAT IT SHOULD STOP."*

It is in this way, we think, many revivals are broken up. Brethren get tired of going to meeting so much, or want their evenings for business, lectures, or other social purposes; or they are weary of so much excitement, and are quite willing to have the work stop. Where this state of feeling prevails, the revival will not trouble them long. And it will generally prevail where the piety of the church is shallow, and they love singing schools and lectures more than the salvation of souls. O, how often has the work of God been left to die to give place for these things! Souls will appear in judgment accursed, which might have been saved, but for the love of ease, and selfish, intellectual, social, if not carnal gratification, in those who

should have "travailed with them in birth till Christ was formed in them."

If revivals are what we claim for them, they are of infinite importance, and should take precedence of everything else. We had better never hear another lecture till dooms-day, or gratify ourselves with an evening's recreation of any sort, than to interrupt one. As to learning the science of music, we admit it important; but in comparison with having souls converted, it is "lighter than vanity." The business which brought the Son of God from heaven, and led him to sustain the agonies of the garden, and the cross, is too momentous to be suspended by such trifling considerations. Yet the moment Christians forsake the work of revival, for any of these things, however interesting, they consent to its arrest, and declare to the world that they esteem the salvation of sinners of minor importance.

6. The idea among members of the church that they *can do nothing*, that the work is *not at all dependent on them*, is *disastrous*. Every person has an influence; and each, generally, has more direct influence on certain individuals, at present, than all other persons taken together. That influence may be sufficient to bring them to Christ, or keep them from him, whatever may oppose. If only one quarter of the church enter into the

revival, those persons under the immediate influence of the other three-quarters, who stand aloof, cannot be reached. They have, in a certain sense, not formally and in so many words, but in fact, committed the keeping of their souls to those who seem perfectly at ease. The minister may speak to them, and others interested in the work may do all they can, but it is to no purpose, because those in whom they chiefly confide on this subject, declare by their actions, that there is no occasion for concern. Perhaps the professor is the wife, and the unbeliever the husband. But she is backslidden in heart, vain, worldly, and prayerless ; and takes no interest in the work, except it may be to object to certain men and measures. Now, while she sets such an example, and exerts such an influence over that husband, what is the prospect of his being converted. If she were out of the way, something might be done with him ; but while she occupies her present position, all effort will be fruitless.

This is precisely the situation of many children. God has awakened them, and the church has prayed for them ; but the influence of their parents, being paramount, keeps them from yielding to their convictions. Thus those who should be the first to bring them to Christ, guard the tree of life against
1, and unless God takes them out of the way,

or the children leave the parental roof, they will plunge them into perdition, notwithstanding the atonement of Christ, and the tears and agonies of God's people. O, what sin, what cruelty is here !

This view of the subject explains why revivals are often so limited. But few members of the church engage in them. The majority are mere honorary members, they help pay the expenses, perhaps, but do nothing for revival, and those they might benefit remain unaffected. Only let the whole church come up to the work, and there would be a general rally to the cross. But this is seldom seen. Revivals are brought about and sustained by the *few*, while the majority do little or nothing. They either adopt the heretical notion, that because the work is of God, he will carry it on without them ; or assume what is generally false, viz., that they have no talent or influence, which, if exerted, would contribute to its interest. This should encourage Christians still to believe for revival, though many come not up to the help of the Lord. God will bless the efforts of the faithful according to their circumstances and influence, and his cause will prosper, though not as it would if all his professed followers would do their duty.

7. Erroneous sentiments concerning the *nature* and *sources* of a revival, will obstruct it. To attribute it entirely to God, first and last, means and

ends, is to annihilate all sense of responsibility, and arrest all proper means for its promotion. It is equally injurious to attribute it to *man*, and make him the author of his own conversion. God will not give his glory to another. The former views have always been death to a revival. Preached in advance, they will prevent one; preached in the midst of a revival, they will stop it. This has been tried enough to require no farther proof. The latter opinion, more recent in its origin, has been submitted to a pretty severe ordeal during the few years of dearth under which the church has been suffering of late. If any had run into the presumption that they were so wise and skilful in divine things as to persuade men to convert themselves without the aid of the Spirit, the fruitlessness of their latter endeavors must have taught them better views.

8. *Deformity in the Christian character* of those who labor for a revival, operates greatly against it. We refer to those, who, with many good qualities, possess some capital faults. Here, for instance, is an excellent minister. He is a man of talent, and peculiarly adapted to awaken attention, and promote revivals, but he runs in debt, and does not pay promptly. Now, though his intentions may be strictly honest, this defect

will go far to impair his influence, and injure the revival. Instead of this fault, he may neglect to govern his children as he ought, or he may allow himself to become excited with anger, relate incredible stories, or indulge some other foolish habit, which will tarnish his Christian character. Whatever the fault be, it will do great harm, and ought to be corrected.

Laymen of excellent reputation, generally, have sometimes destroyed their influence by *idleness*, or by appearing too sharp in trade, or manifesting undue attention to the other sex. Sometimes they injure themselves by indulging extravagancies in meeting; by a harsh and discourteous mode of address to those they would benefit; or by some other little deformity, not, perhaps, positively sinful in the sight of God, but so nearly approaching to it as to furnish occasion of reproach. All such things ought to be avoided. They present, at least, an "appearance of *evil*," and should be shunned with the utmost rigidity. Those who will do good in this cause must be as pure as Cæsar's wife — above suspicion.

8. Any thing *which is calculated to divert the public mind*, and especially if its tendency be to create a doubt of the sanctity of religion, will greatly hinder a revival. A war, or famine, or

pestilence, a contention in the church, though it may be limited to a few individuals, or a caravan, or, indeed, any thing else which engrosses attention, however innocent in itself, will have this effect. For this reason, we have been constrained to regret the return of the season for lyceums and other lectures, and exhibitions. Such attractions are the signal of retreat from the house of God. And, in many cases, this evil is among the least that attends them. Most of such lectures are of an irreligious cast, embracing witty flings at the church and her institutions. We have heard a few of the most respectable, in the course of the five years last past, on special subjects, and give it as our opinion, that the tendency of them was bad. And this is probably the reason why they were sought by the irreligious, with so much avidity. A corrupt popular taste covets just such an exhibition, and the cause of God must suffer from its influence.

There is much in connection with the subject of geology, which, no doubt, is true. But theories and assumptions of even Christian lecturers, have gone far, we are persuaded, toward strengthening the hands of infidels, and weakening the faith of many who hold the Bible as the Word of God. We heard a distinguished Christian professor, attempt, some months since, to reconcile his won-

derful discoveries with the Scriptures, and sad work did he make of it. His explanations were more incredible than his theory. To embrace the latter, we must renounce Moses, to credit the former, we must deny God.

The representatives of mesmerism, clairvoyance, and associate fooleries, have done their full share of mischief to the cause of Christ. We have not time to enter into the mysteries of their wonderful systems, nor does it become the objects of this work. It is enough for our present purpose to remark, they have led many astray, and done more to destroy confidence in experimental piety, than any other adventurers now before the public. Yet the phenomena upon which they rely for proof of their assumptions, by no means exceeds the Salem witchcraft; and it falls far short of the extraordinary performances of the *sorcerers, magicians, soothsayers, wizards, astrologers, enchanters, mutterers, prognosticators, necromancers, charm-ers*, &c., described in the holy Scriptures. But they are sufficient to give a sort of authority to their pretensions, which done, they have only to despatch some expert clairvoyant to the upper and nether worlds, if indeed such worlds do exist, to gather up proof of any invention which may suit their fancy. By these means, and the various exhibitions of religious states, which have been

presented, many have been turned away from the simplicity of Christ, to follow fables. In our opinion, Christians should avoid such scenes, as they would avoid hell. They are dangerous to their spiritual stability, and the example of running after catch-penny novelties of any kind, is inconsistent with their holy profession.

9. *The introduction of doctrinal discussions* into a revival, is uniformly deleterious. We refer particularly to those doctrines which distinguish Christian sects, and the *controversial* discussion of them. Ministers *must* preach Christian doctrine if they will do good, because it is the ground-work, or foundation of Christian practice ; but they must preach it *practically*; and not *controversially*. Their object should be to prove, and enforce the obligation of their hearers to observe it, rather than to prove the folly or wickedness of those who differ with them. The discussion of election, reprobation, the mode of baptism, or the perseverance of the saints, in this objectionable manner, has never failed, we believe, to obstruct the work. The introduction of these questions, and other denominational abstractions, in this way, is an unmistakeable advertisement to the hearers, that the conversion of sinners is now to be suspended, to give room to proselyte the converts to our particular faith and order.

Such discussions are particularly injurious, where the representatives of different views engage in *public controversy*. The devil understands this, and has no doubt instigated his servants to challenge ministers engaged in revival, to a public debate. And it is lamentable, that he has sometimes succeeded in drawing them into the snare. But in nearly every instance of the kind within the circle of our knowledge, the work has been stopped, though the truth was triumphantly vindicated. If ever the reply of Nehemiah to Sanballat was applicable, it is peculiarly so in reply to all such applications. However it may conflict with our tendencies, or tax our pride, we ought to resist the temptation, and abide in our work; for, it is, indeed, "a great work," and will cease, if we leave it to go down to contend with its enemies.

10. *Imprudence in the management of revivals*, is often the most powerful obstruction they have to meet. This may occur in relation to many particulars. Sometimes too much singing is allowed, and that which is of a character quite too frivolous and airy for the solemnity of the occasion. We have heard such, when mourning would have been more appropriate, and grieved to see the sad effect of it upon the people. It arises from a joyous state of the heart, not properly

chastened by the consideration of the condition of sinners, whose eternal destiny hangs upon the decisions of the present hour. Some of the hymns and tunes thus employed, are not suitable for *any* occasion, much less for that of a revival. They cannot be sung without exciting a trifling spirit among the irreligious, and all good people who understand their tendency, will sorrow to hear them. The leaders in such music ought to be privately advised at an early period, that the work of God may not be hindered by its friends.

Gestures and expressions of a ludicrous nature, though innocent, in themselves considered, are great hinderances to the cause. Religion is a solemn business. The first religious impressions of the sinner are of a very serious character. He knows no joy till God lifts the light of his countenance upon him, and assures him of pardon. But the improprieties objected to, are not calculated either to beget or foster such feelings, but to drive them off. If the speaker is solemn, they are still evils, because they are disgusting in themselves, but if he be in a light and comical mood, they are doubly injurious. Drollery, in a revival of religion, is extremely out of place. And so is any movement calculated to produce disgust, levity, or prejudice.

Meetings have sometimes been held to an undee

length, so as to give occasion to parents and guardians to complain, and make difficulty. There may be times when Christians are justified in continuing their meetings till a late hour; but as a general rule, nothing is lost by keeping good time. This will shut the mouths of gainsayers, and give opportunity for family and secret prayer, and meditation, which are no less important than the more public services.

Christians have sometimes prejudiced the cause by spending so much time at meeting as to neglect their duties at home. Mothers have been known to leave their children to an unreasonable degree. This is not often the case, the tendency is the other way. But wherever it occurs, it gives occasion to complaint, and had better be avoided. We mention these things, not that we would sacrifice principle, or the *true* interests of religion, for the favor and applause of all the world. If we do our duty, and are the means of promoting revivals, the world will hate us. But we *betray* the cause, when we give them unnecessary occasion.

Revivals are frequently hindered by allowing disorderly conduct, on the part of the unbelievers, in and about the place of meeting. This is not always avoidable. Public sentiment may be so against vital religion, as to destroy the authority


of law, and the rabble will have no fear in venting their animosity to any extent they please. Where this is the case, it is well to bear the evil with as much patience as possible. But in most churches, such conduct may be restrained. If, in the first place, the worshippers behave with decorum, and a proper bearing is maintained toward those who are without, the peace may be preserved without trouble.

But should there be some who will not be controlled by moral suasion, it is far better to ask the intervention of the law, than to let the character of the meetings be impeached by the unjust, and unprovoked opposition of a miserable rabble of boys and young men, who are nearly ruined for want of restraint at home. If they are allowed to come into the house of God to frown down the work, and otherwise make disturbance, their awakened companions will see what reproach they have to meet, and thereby be deterred from duty. Another result will be, the more respectable portion of the church, and the community will feel disgusted at the indulgence allowed, and leave. Thus the meetings, having lost their character, will lose their interest, and die out.

We have known several revivals stopped in this way, just as the devil intended, and have taken some pains to set a strong guard at this point.

The application of law has been the last resort in all cases, but has never been applied lightly, or without effect. We believe, in several instances it has had a very fine, moral influence, sufficient to convince us, that had the criminals been governed at an earlier period, they would have been better boys, and grown up to better habits. But however it may be our duty to remedy the errors of parents in this respect, we should avoid being petulant. It is never best to resort to severe measures, unless it is absolutely necessary to preserve the cause from disgrace, and ruin; for however prudently managed, it will more or less impair the interest of the work.

Revivals are sometimes hindered by the extreme *sensitiveness* of some of its friends. They set up a standard of taste or order, agreeable to themselves, and the least deviation from it throws them into excitements and debates, just suited to hinder the faith of others, and stop the work. It may be they don't like this brother's shouting, or that sister's praying, or so much urgency in getting mourners forward; or they may think they are not noticed as much as they deserve. They are in trouble about something much of the time, and when the spell comes on, they begin to complain and prophesy against the work, to the annoyance of many. Now, Christians at such times should



set themselves against all trouble of the kind. Supposing there is a wise manager at the helm, he will regulate the matters complained of as he may, without embarrassing the work, and as to personal inattentions, we had better submit to absolute abuse, than to contend, and injure the cause.

Christians sometimes retard the work by attempting to aid it in a way, and at a point to which they are not adapted. We should at all times study our adaptations, that we may see where we have influence, and where we may appropriate our strength to the best advantage. We had better do nothing, than to do many things that are often done at such times. They operate as a positive hinderance. Christians should be careful to stand in their proper place, and do just the work Providence assigns them, and be contented to trust the rest to others. When we all come to this, how beautifully will every thing move! The whole field will be occupied, every agency be set at work, every sinner and backslider come under faithful and appropriate training, the track will be clear of the principal obstructions, and salvation will roll through the land like a mighty engine, taking along thousands in its course, to the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER IX.

OBJECTIONS TO REVIVALS.

CONSIDERING the nature and ordinary circumstances of revivals of religion, in connection with the natural heart, it is not surprising that they are opposed. Nor is it remarkable that some professors of religion complain of them, for they are as destructive to their systems, and prospects, as to those of common sinners. Many make no pretensions to experimental religion; but rather attribute it to imagination; while others have so far lost the Spirit of Christ, as to find it more agreeable to their feelings to complain of revival operations, than to pray for their success. A better class of people are afraid of running before the Spirit, and some fear that we shall mingle too much of the human with the divine, and spoil the work. Others see evils of a different nature, and far too many are so affected by unbelief, or fear, or both, they do little or nothing for the cause.

From these various sources, there are many ob-

jections urged against revivals, which are entitled to consideration. To a few of these we invite the reader's careful attention.

1. The first, and boldest of all is, that they are *without scripture authority*. If this be true, it is sufficient of itself, and no other need be named. We will examine the first, therefore, and see whether it be well founded. If it can be shown that there is any express command in the scriptures against revivals, or that revivals are opposed to the *spirit* and *objects* of the scriptures, we will yield the point, and set our face against them. For what is inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, as well as what is expressly forbidden, we are bound to reject. But no express command is claimed. No one pretends that God has directly prohibited them. It is only assumed that they are inconsistent with the divine order of things, and come in collision with the indications of revelation. But let us examine the matter.

No one will deny that it is a leading object of the scriptures to bring sinners to repentance. For this the prophets wrote and spoke, and the poets sung. For this John preached when he announced the sudden advent of the Messiah. For this too, Christ came, suffered, and died, and sent forth his ministers to preach the gospel to every creature. And is not this a prominent object of modern re-

vivals ? Are they not scenes of repentance, and reformation ? Do not sinners break off from their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by turning to God ? Do they not cease from profanity, intemperance, Sabbath breaking, dishonesty, and every other known sin, and live soberly, righteously, and godly ? And is not this change of conduct made as prominent an object in revivals as it is in the Scriptures ?

The Scriptures present to our attention a change of heart, as a work to be effected by the Holy Spirit, upon our repentance, and in answer to our prayers. Thus, "except a man be born again, born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It was this that changed the feelings of Saul of Tarsus toward the Christians he was pursuing with violence, and led him to say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Under his instructions, the Philippian jailor afterward experienced the same blessing, and manifested the genuineness of the work, by submitting to the ordinances of Christ, washing the stripes of the persecuted apostles, and setting meat before them, and all this in the face of death itself. This work is everywhere represented as the leading object of gospel arrangements, and is pressed home upon our atten-

tion as indispensable to salvation. And is it not made equally prominent in revivals? Do not ministers preach it with emphasis? Do they not urge sinners to seek it, and examine young professors critically as to whether they have obtained it?

Thus it is obvious that in these two leading objects, the Scriptures and revivals perfectly harmonize. They aim at the same things. And, so far as we have observed them, they differ no more widely in other matters, than in these. Individuals more or less connected with a revival, may be influenced by dissimilar considerations, but this cannot alter the general character of the work. Every genuine revival aims primarily at the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of all God's people to his will and service; and if these are not the all-pervading objects of holy Scripture, we have misapprehended its import. Besides, if we mistake not, the Scriptures present us with accounts of revivals, having divine sanction, which are strikingly analogous to what we enjoy in these latter days. When "all Israel brought up the ark of the Lord to the city of David, with shouting and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalties, and harps," was there nothing of a revival among them? Then they cried

in the ears of all the people, "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come before him; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. And say ye, save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks unto thy holy name, and glory in thy praise." If we were to see a church all assembled, every man in his place, singing and exhorting in such language as this, with the chief magistrate of the state leading them on, and joining with them in their warmest devotions, should we not conclude they were having a revival?

When Hezekiah began to reign, religion was in a very low state. The people had forsaken the house of God, the prescribed offerings had been withholden, the institutions of the church were neglected, and the priests had left the altar to obtain bread from the field. But Hezekiah set himself to bring about a reform. He opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them, called in the priests and Levites, and set them to sanctify themselves, and the house which had become defiled; and when every thing was in order, he "rose early and gathered the rulers of the city,"

and went up to the temple, and there offered burnt offerings, and sin offerings, according to the provisions of the law, and made confession, and praised God, and rejoiced with "all the people, that God had prepared the people; for the thing was done *suddenly*." There was no want of priests or Levites, or singers, or people, or offerings, now. The king had set himself to have a revival, and God had blessed his endeavors.

This being done, he made arrangements for the extension of the work. Thus far, it had been confined to the city. He now sent to all Israel, and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim, and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel. So the posts rode in every direction, and the people came up with offerings of all lawful kinds, beyond the necessities of the occasion, and prepared themselves, and worshipped, and kept the feast seven days, with great gladness; and the Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day. And such was the interest of the occasion, they found it hard to part even then. So "the whole assembly took counsel, and kept other seven days with gladness. And there was great joy in Jerusalem, such as there had not been since the days of Solomon. Then the priests and rose and blessed the people; and their

voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven."—2 *Chron. chapters 30, 31, and 32.*

Who does not see in this brief sketch, striking evidence of a powerful work of God. Hezekiah understood it to be the work of God, and to be a *revival* too, for it was the same religion his fathers enjoyed under the reign of David and Solomon, and it was set forth according to the law of Moses. And he did not misjudge, as the sequel will show. For being dismissed, "all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places, and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all." Thus the work went on till a thorough reform was effected, for it is said that "every work that Hezekiah began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

There was a similar work in Jerusalem, under the reign of Josiah, a few years after. It is said that he "took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to

serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers." The revivals which occurred by the instrumentality of Ezra and Nehemiah, were not less powerful. They were originated in the same way, and issued in similar benefits to the people. Every thing was not done in exact order, nor did all hold out who made a profession, but nevertheless great good was accomplished. The progress of idolatry was checked, the public heart was turned toward the Lord, and religious order was re-established. But we have not room to speak of them particularly.

If we come down to the days of John the Baptist, we find that though another dispensation is opened, the work of God is essentially the same. He came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying "*Repent* ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." His object was the same as that of the revivalists of former days before mentioned, viz. : to reform the people, and bring them to love and serve God. And he was successful, for we are told, that "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about," went out to him and were baptized, confessing their sins. And so great was the excitement, that even the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism. The three years of

Christ's ministry were years of great religious interest. When John announced his approach, the church and the world were deeply sunk in ignorance and vice. As he and his apostles went forth preaching and teaching, the people started from their slumbers, and many gave heed to the things they heard.

But the gospel in its fulness, was yet to be developed. Jerusalem had been the scene of great revivals. But prophets had foretold a greater, which was yet to appear. So, after all matters pertaining to the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, had been fully considered, and the vacancy occasioned in the apostolate, by the death of Judas, filled; while the apostles were assembled "with one accord in one place, there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and filled all the house where they were sitting. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Here the work commenced, and immediately it was noised abroad, and the people were "amazed, and began to marvel, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others, mocking, said, These men are filled with new wine." But Peter vindicated the work, and preached, as did the other apostles, convincing the people of "sin, of righteousness,

and of a judgment to come," till "they were pricked in their hearts, and said, men and brethren, what shall we do?" The result of that day's effort was an accession of three thousand souls to the church. And still the work continued, for the "Lord added to the church *daily* such as should be saved."

From this time, the revival spirit spread till the whole country was brought under its influence. Who can read the eventful history of the apostles without seeing that they were revival preachers? Let such sudden transitions of character occur under modern preaching as we witness at Caesarea, under Peter, or at Philippi, under Paul and Silas, or at Samaria, under Philip, and sinners, and false professors would complain loudly. What would many of our churches think, if their ministers should go to "getting up" such confessions, and reform; such tumultuous singing and praising God, and such immense collections of people from all parts of the country, with gifts, and contributions, more than enough to place the cause beyond embarrassment? And what would they say, if they were to hold a meeting *fourteen days* in succession, and keep the town, or city, in a storm of religious excitement for that great length of time? But God's faithful servants, Hezekiah, and Josiah, and others, did this very thing, and the Lord ap-

proved, and gave them his presence and blessing. The truth is, many of the church organizations of this day would be as much disturbed by such a revival, as the devils coming out of the tombs, were at the approach of Jesus. They are as opposed to the spirituality and life of religion, as were the Pharisees and hypocrites of the first century, and if they were as ceremonial or liberal as their Jewish predecessors, they might well be characterized with them as "whited sepulchres." When spiritual religion is at the lowest ebb, it is flood tide with them. A time of revival is to them a time of darkness and trial. When men pray least, and pride and fashion reach their rankest growth, they flourish. Let the spirit of seriousness and prayer come over the people, and they languish and die, while praying churches rejoice and prosper.

We learn that revivals are Scriptural from other indications. Says the Psalmist, in addressing himself to his Maker, "Wilt thou not receive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" "Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou madest strong for thyself." The prophet Habak-

kuk, aiming at the same thing, prays, "O Lord, revive thy work ; in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy." These prayers were offered in behalf of the church, when she was in a low state, and relate to spiritual as well as temporal blessings.

The *predictions* of Scripture anticipate the same events. They point out what God would do for his people at a future day, and one of them began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. "For," said Peter, in explaining the nature of that work, "this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel : And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams ; and on my servants and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."

We see, then, that not only the spirit and objects of the Scriptures are precisely the same as those displayed in modern revivals, but that the *history, prayers, and predictions* of Scripture, all conspire to show, that revivals are of ancient origin, and have the sanction and blessing of God, as their infallible author. The objection, therefore, that they are unscriptural, is entirely ground-

less. There is the same authority for them, we have for faith, or obedience, or prayer, for they involve all these, and where these are in general exercise, there is a revival.

"Happy soul, who sees the day,
The glad day of gospel grace;
Thee, my Lord, (thou then wilt say,)
Thee will I for ever praise;
Though thy wrath against me burn'd,
Thou dost comfort me again;
All thy wrath aside is turned,
Thou hast blotted out my sin."

2. Another objection urged against revivals, is, that they lead to *enthusiasm and disorder*. Taking the first term in its common acceptation, we admit that they do lead to enthusiasm, but deny that this is a valid objection to them. The truth is, any degree of religious zeal, with worldlings and formalists, is thought to be enthusiasm. Let ministers and Christians begin to act in earnest, and attempt to do something for the souls of perishing men; or let them feel the inspiration of love, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost, and praise God with emotion, and they are charged at once with enthusiasm. According to this standard, David was the greatest enthusiast that ever lived. And Hezekiah, and Isaiah, and Paul, and John, were rank enthusiasts. Having never felt the "joys of salvation" in their own hearts, or having lost "their first love," and relapsed into the spirit of

should discover that a small part of the quantity had been injured by the voyage, and that the rest had not suffered at all, would you cast the whole of it from you, or would you not rather make a careful separation between the good and the bad, retaining the one, and rejecting the other? And why should not the same principle be admitted in respect to revivals? Would it not be more equitable, would it not be more candid, to separate the precious from the vile, and to let the sentence of condemnation fall only where it is deserved?"

In regard to the other part of the objection; we admit there is more danger of *certain* disorders in times of revival, than at other times. People are more likely to stay late at meeting, to speak and sing earnestly and loudly, and devote much of their precious time to religious duties, all of which are disorders in the esteem of some. They may desire to carry matters to greater lengths, than what the more considerate regard to be expedient. But it is to be considered, whether these disorders are not infinitely less than those which are practised by many when there is no revival. The greatest disorder into which a church can fall, is that of spiritual *indifference*. To God it is infinitely offensive. "I would," says he, "thou wert cold or hot. So, because thou art

lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And is it not a horrid disorder for sinners, living under the very wing of the church, to continue to resist the Holy Ghost, and go on in rebellion against their Creator? If those churches which are so afraid of the disorders of revivals, would only think what terrible disorders they are practising every day, in living in so much conformity to the world, and in so many sins, and in such coldness, letting sinners go on to destruction undisturbed, we should hear no more of this objection.

Those who will have revivals, must not be too particular. There was never one yet which was not marred by some human imperfection, and we fear there never will be. All will allow that Hezekiah was a very prudent man, and that he managed the revival under him, with great propriety. Yet, he had occasion to mourn over dangerous disorders. "For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulon, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover *otherwise than as it was written.*" — 2 Chron. 30: 18. This was a great evil, but who will not admit, that it was vastly less, than that the people should continue in their idolatry, and the house and ordinances of God remain neglected. If "a multitude" ate the

Passover as it was *not* written, many more ate it as it *was* written. Hezekiah deeply regretted this irregularity, but did he give up the revival, to avoid a repetition of it? Far from it. He did as every sensible, pious man would do—he set himself to correct the evil in such a way as not to hinder the good that was being done. He “prayed for them, saying, The Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.”

But what are frequently characterized as disorders, are not so. They are the legitimate out-speaking of a living soul, a soul upon which God is at work. Some who saw the publican smite upon his breast, and heard him cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” no doubt thought him a little beside himself. The disciples considered it disorderly for the woman of Canaan to cry so loud and long after Jesus, that he might deliver her daughter of the devil with which she was vexed. But Christ commended her. And so it is now. Every thing which does not exactly tally with the narrow notions, and stereotyped formalities of some men, is disorderly, and every manifestation of feeling, whether of joy or sorrow, is enthusiasm.

If such persons were to be regarded, revivals would have a speedy end.

But while we pay little respect to this kind of fastidiousness, we insist on consistency of deportment. Persons under much excitement, (and excitement they must have to be of any service to the cause of Christ, or to be converted,) are liable to extravagance, as when in earnest about any thing else. But with proper care, no permanent evil will ensue from it. A prudent man, who is himself in the work, will generally be able to regulate almost any amount of religious feeling in community, so as to advance the cause without injuring the machinery. While one who is too courageous, or too cautious, may burst the boiler and run the ship ashore.

8. It is objected, also, that revivals are *inexpedient* — that religion can be better promoted without them. If this be so, then they are not the work of God, or God has erred in regard to the best method of doing his work, neither of which will be assumed. Those who make this objection, are Christians. They believe in conversions, and differ from the friends of revivals only in this, they think that it is better to have sinners come in gradually, and coolly, rather than in groups, and under the excitement common in revivals.

Now, to the conversion of sinners in the way proposed, we make no objection. We have known some interesting cases. Nor, can we object, certainly, to Christians always living in a state of spiritual health and activity, so as to need no occasional quickening. This is, indeed, very desirable. But we know that they do not generally live so. The more common experience is that of stupidity and decline. If one is occasionally aroused, he is soon frozen up again by the coldness of those around him. And when one falls out by the way, there is not spirit and life enough in the rest to restore him, and thus the flock is frittered away. This is the ordinary condition of things, till God pours out his Spirit, and there is a revival. So that the real question at issue is, which is best for the cause, to have revivals of religion, or continual death and decay? In other words, to let the church run out, or relapse into open infidelity or heathenism ; or co-operate with God in stirring up the people by all lawful means to seek their Savior, and prepare for his kingdom.

Look where we may, and we find the occasional conversions contended for, are not half equal to the deaths and apostasies which take place in the churches where they occur. And churches which depend upon these, will inevitably run out, unless they can proselyte the fruit of other men's labors,

or contrive some way to make it popular for unconverted men to join them. Both of these expedients are resorted to, by some churches, rather than to submit to the labor of having revivals. So they resist the Holy Ghost, deny the faith, daub with untempered mortar, and steal the lambs of other flocks, while they leave sinners to perish in their sins.

If it were practicable to secure the objects of revivals without the labor, and anxiety, and excitement, and persecution connected with them, every friend of Christ would rejoice. It could have been no gratification to Jeremiah to weep day and night over the desolations of Zion ; or to Nehemiah, to hazard his life, and reputation, and face a storm of persecution, to revive the work of God in Jerusalem. Nor was it any pleasure to the apostles to be traduced, and stoned, and killed, aside from the *utility* of the work to which they were devoted. And we have no doubt, that revival ministers and churches now-a-days, would enjoy the honors, and repose of idleness in God's vineyard, as well as others, if it were not for the necessity they see for activity, and the commands of conscience. But they have no such ideas of the prince of darkness, as to believe that he will surrender his empire in the human heart without some ado. Nor have they such low views of the

power and dominion of sin, the *habit* and *love* of it, as to suppose that the sinner can be persuaded to renounce it without some extraordinary influence being exerted over him. Much less do they conceive how he can repent and take up the cross, and follow Christ, without *excitement*. It is utterly impossible. What! give up his idols, his darling pleasures, his lucrative, but wicked business, that is richly endowing him, his relatives and associates who love and flatter him, give them all up without excitement! Is it possible! And submit to Christ, too, against his own prejudices, and the prejudices of the community; against the remonstrances of his wife, and the taunts of his friends; against the reproaches of the wicked, and many false professors, and all without excitement! How ridiculous! How unphilosophical! It is a libel upon all experience and common sense.

Saul of Tarsus was a man of the utmost candor, and reflection. If any one can be reasoned out of his prejudices, and brought to the deliberate and unexcited choice of Christ, he might have been. But God knew that such were his feelings and relations, that nothing short of a terrible excitement would bring him to right action, and he had it. "Trembling and astonished," he made his first acknowledgment of the proper character of Jesus, and sought counsel at his hand. The

jailer was equally alarmed. Sinners never seek God as they ought, till by a light from heaven, or an earthquake, or some distressing affliction, or by the powerful word or Spirit of God, they are driven to extremities, and feel they must repent or be damned. And to think of bringing them to this point without excitement, is the height of folly. But this excitement is impossible in the stupid process contended for in the objection. God works by means, and his means generally have some adaptation to the end to be secured. But this is a *lulling* process, that stupifies a dozen to every one it arouses, and brings to Christ; and to abandon revivals to drag along in so sluggish a manner, is to renounce Christianity.

4. It is objected, that revivals sometimes lead to *insanity* and *suicide*. We will not deny that instances of the kind have occurred. It is well known that minds of a certain cast cannot endure excitement from any source, and when they have taken an interest in religion, whether in a revival or not, they have, in some cases, lost their balance. But, that this is a valid objection to revivals, we deny. More have become insane for the want of religion, than ever did in seeking it, or in its enjoyment. For instance, where they have met with severe reverses of fortune, and lost their chief good. Had they placed their

affections on God, and made the lost object subordinate, as any Christian would have done, they had been able to rejoice in their trouble, and thus been saved from wreck. People often commit suicide through excessive passion, but religion excludes it. Disappointed love has sometimes been the occasion of insanity, but he who makes religion his theme, loves God supremely, and his creatures as may consist therewith.

But why is not this objection urged, if it be valid, against other things, which occasion these evils? Did one ever object to matrimony because lovers sometimes vex, and drive each other to suicide? Or to business, because some business men have been perplexed and deranged thereby? Or to education, because students have sometimes wrung their brains to excess? Such a thing was never known. All agree that these are contingencies for which matrimony, business, and learning, are not responsible. Why not apply the same principle to revivals? The answer is plain—the objector is an enemy to religion. He seeks to impeach it, that he may stop its progress. He don't object to dancing till a late hour of the night, at balls and parties. This to him is right enough, though thousands have lost their lives by the means. Nor does he object to drinking alcoholic liquors, though the most fruitful source of

insanity and death in the known world. Why not? The reason is obvious—he loves the dance, and he loves the bottle. But religion! revivals! ah! these are terrible evils!

But we believe the number of these cases is greatly exaggerated. They are published and republished in the papers and pulpits of the enemies of the work, with so much emphasis, they seem to be numerous; which is not the fact. But were they ten times as many as they are assumed to be, revivals would still be vastly important. Their advantages infinitely more than counterbalance the evil mentioned, in its worst form; for proof of which we have only to look at the facts involved. On the one side, there is the premature death of a fellow being, perhaps a father, husband, or brother. A great loss indeed! But it may be his gain. On the other, the church has been greatly quickened, and thus, many saved, perhaps from backsliding, and one or two hundred sinners have turned from sin to holiness, and become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Some of them were profane, intemperate, licentious, Sabbath-breakers, and otherwise opposed to God and good society, corrupting and being corrupted; but now they are “washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Had they continued in

sin another year, possibly another month, they might have been lost ; but now they have good hope of everlasting life. In the balances of eternity, these considerations outweigh all others.

5. It is farther objected, that *revivals disturb the peace of families*. That some families have been disturbed by revivals we are not disposed to deny. This is an evidence that they are *Christian* revivals. "I come not," said Christ, "to send peace, but a sword. For I come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." The meaning is, the doctrine I shall preach, and the religion the people will embrace through me, is so opposed to established systems and prejudices, and especially the prejudices of the natural heart, that unbelievers will be offended, and persecute those of their own household. This prophecy was literally fulfilled, and has ever been, where Christ has been faithfully preached, and revivals enjoyed. Children have been severely punished, parents insulted and abused, and wives inhumanly threatened and oppressed. But we deny that revivals are responsible. These things are the products of the carnal mind. In their enmity against God, wicked men venture to take liberties with the inalienable rights of others, and assume to dictate what sort

of religion they shall have, and how much of it. They usurp prerogatives over their wives and children, which God has never given them. The responsibility of the difficulty rests on them, and revivals are only the innocent occasion of it. Their friends are doing a solemn duty, obeying God, but they interfere and claim paramount authority.

But were these difficulties many times as numerous and great as they really are, they would form no valid objection to revivals. They were greater in the days of Christ and the apostles than now ; and yet these immortal exemplars of revival effort, pushed their endeavors in every direction, and stayed not for any domestic, or other troubles, that opposed them. And besides, great as they may be, the blessings of revivals are unspeakably greater. The former are social and temporal, the latter spiritual and eternal. If the peace of some families is disturbed, that of others is restored — if the pleasures of sin are interrupted, those of religion are established.

6. It is objected that many who are, or profess to be converted in revivals, *soon relapse into their old habits, and are as bad, and sometimes even worse than they were before.* We are frank to admit that these statements are too true. The Christian church has experienced deep mortifica-

tion and reproach from this source, and would fain avoid all occasion of more, if practicable. But whether this evil is attributable to revivals, is another question. Do not apostasies occur, too, among the few who profess conversion when there is no revival? We do not refer to a moral, and steady class, who join the church without much spiritual light. They never get very high, and seldom fall, whether they join in a revival or not. We refer especially to those who are awakened and converted *singly*, and come along without attracting much attention. Are there no relapses among these? We speak with some authority when we affirm, there are as many backsliders among them in proportion to the whole number, as among those who are converted in revivals. But the whole number being comparatively small, the apostasies are few. This is one reason why they may seem to persevere better than others. And another is, making so little ado about their conversion, their decline is less marked than it would be under other circumstances. The objection, therefore, lies with as much force against conversions at any time, as against those which occur in revivals.

The idea implied in this objection, viz. : that revivals are characterized by too much excitement to produce sound and enduring conversions, is an

error. As we have before intimated, it is impossible in the nature of the case, to be converted by repentance toward God, and faith in Christ without excitement. And the colder the church and the community are, the greater the necessity, because the cross is greater than in a general awakening. If strong excitement, therefore, is dangerous to the stability of converts, they run greater hazard in being converted at a time of spiritual indifference than in a revival. But it should not be forgotten, that with all the apostasies among revival converts, which we allow are very numerous and painful, the great mass of professors, who now compose the Christian church, are of this class. It appears, also, that many of them were converted in revivals, which were thought to be managed with the greatest imprudence. This is strictly true with many who form the spiritual bone and sinew of the church. So, that while we have reason to mourn that some converts backslide, we can rejoice and thank God that many persevere. The revivals under the kings and prophets of old, were followed by apostasies greater than what it has fallen to our lot to see. They even relapsed into idolatry, and abjured their Maker almost to a man. But the few who remained, did not consider this an objection to a revival, but rather an infinite reason why there should be one. And it will be

observed, that this was their principal argument with God, to secure his interposition. If people would be converted, and live religion as they ought, a revival would not be necessary. But they are strongly reluctant to embrace Christ, and prone to forsake him; and hence we must have revivals, or sink down to destruction.

But we apprehend that many of the apostasies referred to, are chargeable upon the church rather than upon the revival. Many churches are so cold and careless, they take little care of converts. They seem to expect that they will act just like old Christians, and that without training; and if they do not, they comfort themselves by saying, "there, that is just as I expected, I thought they would not persevere." Young converts are in a critical condition. They need the greatest sympathy, and watch-care possible, and unless they receive it, will be likely to decline. Before we urge their apostasy as an objection to revivals, we had better inquire whether we have done all our duty to them. This, perhaps, may remedy the evil, and supercede the objection.

These, we believe to be the most prominent and plausible objections that can be started; yet they are not worthy to be compared to the advantages of the work they are designed to reproach. And this is true of all the evils we have ever

known to result from revivals. To reform sinners and wed them to Christ, is a great business—a vast enterprise!

“ Enough to fill an angel’s heart,
And filled a Savior’s hands.”

It is also a difficult work. One which requires great *courage and energy*, and faith — great patience and perseverance ; and one which few men can prosecute successfully, without sometimes committing great mistakes. Yet we would say to them, and to all, *work on!* Watch and pray ; be *careful*, but *courageous*, and *energetic* ; move *gently*, but with *power* ; *determine* on success, and have it. It is the work of God, and is infinitely better for sinners, with all the defects of human ignorance and passion that sometimes attach to it, than undisturbed sin.

CHAPTER X.

THE MANNER OF IMPROVING REVIVALS, TO RENDER THEM MOST USEFUL.

IF it were true that the sinner once converted to God is secure for heaven, it would be less important what training he should receive as a young convert. Yet, it cannot be denied, even in this case, that such a training as would promote his usefulness to others, would be desirable. But since God has made both his final salvation and usefulness in a great measure dependent on himself, and since his course is, in an important sense, to be determined by his instructors, great care should be taken so to educate and govern young converts, as to preserve them in the faith, and render them in the highest degree useful and happy. In making a few suggestions on this point, we remark,

1. *They should be treated with the utmost tenderness and sympathy.* God has designated them, "new-born babes," "babes in Christ," &c., indicating the guilelessness, and childlike sincerity, and delicacy of their minds. However stern and

inflexible may be their natural composition, and whatever severity they may be able to endure from the world, they are exceedingly tender on all spiritual questions, and ill-prepared for any thing like coldness or harshness from their spiritual counsellors. Thus says St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "we were *gentle* among you, even as a *nurse cherisheth her children*. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, *as a father doth his children*, that ye would walk worthy of God."

Dr. Clarke's paraphrase, in part, of these verses, is as follows: "Far from assuming the authority which we had, we acted toward you as a tender nurse or parent does to a delicate child. We fed, counselled, cherished and bore with you; we taught you to walk, preserved you from stumbling, and led you in a right way. We had such intense love for you, that we were not only willing and forward to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to you; but also to give our *own lives* for your sake, because ye were dear unto us."

He adds, "What pastoral care is marked here? *They comforted.* They found many under trials and temptations, and these they encouraged. The spirit in which they performed all these branches of the pastoral care, was that which was most likely to ensure success; as a father treats his children, so they treated every member of the church."

Young converts are ignorant. They cannot have learned the whole will of God, especially those who have almost entirely neglected his word; much less do they understand all the devices of "the wicked one." They, therefore, not only need instruction on all points pertaining to their religious welfare, but they equally need the utmost forbearance and kindness of their ministers and brethren. They often stumble through misapprehension. They suppose that to be sin which is only temptation. And they not unfrequently mistake faith for presumption, or compare themselves with what others appear to be, instead of the Bible, and thus get into darkness and doubts. They may have formed wrong notions of the nature and effects of religion, and are perplexing themselves, because their experience does not harmonize fully with them. They have not as much feeling as they expected; or, perchance, have not seen a great light like others; or are tempted to

believe themselves hypocrites, when in fact they are sincere and honest Christians.

Now, these and many other little difficulties, incident to spiritual infancy and childhood, are to be met and rectified in the spirit of sympathy and kindness, if we will save the subjects of them from discouragement and backsliding. To pass coldly by young converts under any of these embarrassments, or in any way to insinuate that they are not converted, or have backslidden, and treat them rather as an executioner than a parent, or a nurse, is a miserable error, which can but prove fatal, in many cases. This, certainly, is not cherishing them "as a nurse cherishes her children." They need to be visited, and noticed, and conversed with, and prayed for, as they never were before; and especially, as old companions and friends may be still teasing, and worrying them with solicitations, and threats, and persecutions, they hardly know how to bear.

We are aware there is difficulty connected with this subject. It is a settled fact that those who have been the means of the sinner's conversion, are most esteemed by him, and are, therefore, best qualified in one respect, at least, to become his spiritual guides. They have a reciprocal feeling towards each other, growing out of the circumstances in the case, which can exist in no other

relation ; something like the feeling of parents and children. But still, as real religion is the same in all hearts, and the temptations and trials incident to its practice and enjoyment, are common to all communities, it is practicable for Christians to enter sympathetically and affectionately into the interests of young converts, with whose spiritual birth they had nothing to do. Of course, we refer to *Christians*, persons who have been converted themselves, and who retain their "*first love*." If men have not been converted, or have backslidden from Christ, and lost their interest in religion, they cannot enter into the trials and feelings of young converts. Their course will naturally be cold and stiff, and harsh — it will be repulsive rather than inviting, and if it drives them off to other churches, and associations, it is no more than we might reasonably expect. The truth is, their minds are easily affected ; they properly desire, and expect the kindest treatment from older Christians with whom they associate, and if they do not receive it, it afflicts them, because they are but babes in Christ, and need it.

This subject is one to which itinerant ministers should give special attention. It has occurred to us, when listening to complaints about the converts gathered into the church under the labors of a successful predecessor, whether the fault was not

more in the present incumbent, than in him, or in the converts themselves. One thing is quite certain, viz., some ministers seldom have such complaints to make. They go to their new field in the *spirit* of revival, visit, and get personally acquainted with all the converts, "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep," and thus so ingratiate themselves into the affections of all, as to secure all to Christ and the church. In doing this, they find great need of charity, and patience, and possibly have to resist some temptations to evil speaking against the late pastor, and the revival under his administrations; but I submit it to the reader, whether it is not the more maganimous and Christian course. If itinerant ministers do not pursue it, the time will come when those who labor most among them for the conversion of sinners, must be discouraged. Pleasant as the work is, under ordinary circumstances, no man can feel much interest in having sinners born into the kingdom of God to be buried by his successor. If the converts brought into the church by the tears and labors of one man were to be left to die, uncared for by him who might come after, as the victims of false hopes, and spurious revivals, the most painful results would be inevitable.

It will be recollected that a few years since there were many evangelists connected with differ-

ent denominations, preaching in all our permanent places, and that many sinners professed to be converted. But a large number of their own brethren opposed them, and said all manner of evil of the work. Among other things, they predicted a reaction, and in many places it has come to pass accordingly. Those who uttered the prediction have congratulated themselves on their wisdom and foresight, and sent forth many strong denunciations of evangelists and their movements. But have they ever considered how much they did to make their own prediction true? How did they treat the evangelists? Why, just in the way to alienate all their friends from them. And how did they treat the converts? In many cases as if they were hypocrites, or dupes. And their conduct toward the revival was such as to destroy the confidence of its friends in them as Christians. Is there any marvel, then, that converts should not come into their churches, and feel at home, and be faithful? They were treated as suspicious characters from the beginning. Had these ministers co-operated with the evangelists as far as possible, (I speak not now of every ranter who was abroad, but of reasonable and Christian men,) the result, I apprehend, would have been different.

The private members of the church should treat young converts with attention, as well as ministers.

This is particularly necessary where the ministry is frequently changing. They should so interest themselves in the experience and progress of every one, as to secure their most sincere affection. This will give the church an influence over them, to keep them in the way, and restore them, should they wander, which nothing else can give. So that if the ministry is changed, or ceases altogether for a time, they will have affectionate watch care, and be holden to the church and the cause, by indissoluble ties.

2. *Young converts should early be received into church fellowship.* They are often inclined to defer this duty, and may need prompting. It has long been the practice of sinners to hold up the church to ridicule. When they become converted, they remember it, and find it a cross to form a connection which will expose them to so much reproach. Besides, they may have been acquainted with members of the church in whom they had no confidence, and conclude, therefore, that to join will not benefit them. Moreover, they may not know of any church whose doctrines and usages are, in all respects, agreeable to their views. And furthermore, unless one is fully settled and fixed in his purposes to be for God at all hazards, and avail himself of all possible restraints to sin, and

stimulants to holiness, he may hesitate about placing himself in a position of exposure to the scrutiny and censure of others. These, with numerous corresponding considerations, together with the ordinary suggestions of the tempter, frequently influence young converts to remain alone, and independent of all church organizations.

To this conclusion they are sometimes urged by various factionists, who have mounted their respective *hobbies*, and driven them in every direction ; and because the church happens to be a little behind her duty in some points, and will not mount with them and join in the wild and visionary rush, have determined upon her overthrow. Though heaven and earth will sooner pass away, than they will effect their object, their influence is considerable, and always disastrous.

Now, all these, and similar circumstances, should be resisted, and the young convert early baptized, and brought into the church. This is according to original practice. In the first revival at Jerusalem after the ascension of Christ, about *three thousand* souls were baptized and added to the church in *one day*, and that, the day of their conversion. The result was, " they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers, praising God and having favor with all the people." When

Saul of Tarsus was converted, he arose and was baptized, and took upon him the responsibilities of church membership. Soon after, he baptized and received the Philippian jailer and his family, in the *same night* that they believed. We never hear the apostles telling young converts, "they had better wait and see if they hold out." This is a modern invention. When the eunuch believed with all his heart, Philip, though he knew little about him, baptized and took him into fellowship. Not a word is said about "taking time to consider, or being too precipitate." His believing in Christ, seems to have been a sufficient reason with Philip, for cutting his connection with the world, and wedding him to the church.

The advantages of this course are many. In the first place, it assures the convert of our confidence, while to hold him off is an expression of distrust. Being a solemn confession of the work wrought, and a formal pledge to God and his people, that we will live in all things according to the gospel of Christ, it can but operate as a safeguard in times of trial. To celebrate the holy sacrament, and thus renew our professions and pledges, exerts a powerful influence in the same direction. The thought, too, that we are kindly watched over, has a favorable effect. It may restrain from many sins, which, under other circumstances, we might

be left to commit. And how pleasant it is to enjoy the sympathy and counsel of brethren in Christ, when overwhelmed with the temptations and afflictions incident to a Christian life? All these things, together with the common religious intercourse of Christians associated together in the same religious connection, render it infinitely important to bring young converts into the church, without delay. If old Christians need the helps derivable from this source, to live, how much more do young converts need them! To put them off, and keep them from the sacraments, to see whether they are going to hold out, or to allow them to stand aloof from the church, without kindly correcting their error, and persuading them to a more Christian course, is the almost certain way to ruin them.

If one has determined to devote himself to God, the more he can strengthen and fortify that purpose, the better. He should take measures to render retreat as difficult as possible, and to environ himself with motives to go forward. This, every convert does, when he formally bids farewell to the world, and identifies himself with the people of God. He has crossed the river, and like a distinguished general marching to the battle field, settled upon victory or death, he tears up the bridge behind him. Every thing is staked

upon the enterprise. To advance is to gain all, and more, even, than it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. To retreat, is to lose all for this world, as well as that which is to come. For, when a man has once betrayed Christ, at the hazard of an endless heaven, he cannot respect himself, nor will he feel that he is entitled to the respect of others.

We might urge the early reception of converts into the church, from the fact that where they decline joining, they uniformly apostatize. Among the scores, if not hundreds, we have known to adopt this policy, we are unable to think of one who has retained his first love. They have all lost the power of religion, and generally its entire form, and sunk deeper in sin and guilt than before. And why? Simply because they undertook to go to heaven in their own way, without the cross. They meant to shape their religion so as to enjoy the friendship of the world, which is enmity to God; and the *profits* of Christ, without his *reproach*. In other words, they assumed to be wiser than their Maker. *He* saw it necessary for his children to be distinguished by significant signs or ordinances, and associated in the bonds of a holy, and exclusive brotherhood, and issued his commands accordingly; but they have spurned all these provisions of his mercy as useless for-

malities, and attempted his service in disobedience to his authority, and in conformity to the dictates of pride and self-conceit. How can any soul expect to be saved in this way? To be converted to God, sinners have to take up the cross and obey him according to their best knowledge and ability. How is it possible for them to refuse obedience when converted, without falling into darkness and spiritual death? As well might they have obtained pardon without repentance, as to obtain heaven, without bearing the cross, and obeying the gospel.

We do not say, where young Christians are kept out of the church by the opposition of their parents and guardians, or by the unbelief, neglect, or excessive caution of those whose business it is to lead them forward, the effect will be precisely the same. But we cannot indulge a doubt, that thousands of genuine converts have utterly fallen away, who might have been bright and shining lights to this day, had they been kindly taken by the hand at an early period, and led to the ordinances of God's house, and been embosomed in his church. But being young, or unfortunately connected with poor, degenerate, and ignorant families, or deeply immersed in sin, they were suspected, and put off, and neglected,

till they found the church had no confidence in them, and gave up in despair.

I am aware of the reasons for such neglect, but they are inefficient. What though the world do reproach us for receiving such persons ; so did the Pharisees reproach Christ for receiving the publicans. And suppose we have to drop or ex-communicate many, and it is not unlikely we may, what of that? We had better drop half of them, if necessary, than to neglect our duty to *one*. The apostles did not refuse to baptize men of any rank or nation, when they believed, though they never saw them before. They threw their net around all they could, and relinquished their hold on none, till compelled. So ought all ministers to do.

3. Young converts should be directed to *suitable books and papers*, and urged to store their minds with useful knowledge. Without some instruction on this subject, they will probably be misled. Trained in irreligious families, as many have been, it is impossible that they should be properly informed, either as to the sources of knowledge, or the importance of its acquisition. Perhaps they may have had no taste for reading. If so, it is still more necessary that they be advised ; for if taken in season, a taste may be created. Indeed, there are many books so intimately

connected with the liveliest emotions of a young convert's heart, he cannot fail to be interested in them. And, besides, they will greatly strengthen and establish him in the truth, and qualify him to do good to others. Every good man must be useful. But those who are best informed, are calculated to be most useful, other circumstances being equal. They know the truth, and how to apply it, for they have searched for it as for hid treasure; and they will be respected by community, where the ignorant are despised.

In view of these considerations, we have taken some pains to induce converts to procure them a small library of the right kind. In many instances, they have done so; but in numerous others, they have chosen rather to leave instruction to come as it might, without effort, or expense on their part; or not come at all. The history of the two classes furnishes ample evidence of the importance of the measure here recommended. It is obvious enough, most men must be converted in regard to their reading, or their religion will be as the morning cloud, which passeth away.

They should also be induced to take a religious paper. Most of the periodicals of the day are as deleterious to piety as Paine's Age of Reason. Though they contain much that is useful, they should be abandoned in favor of those which are

safe. Every Christian ought to keep himself informed of the progress of Christ's kingdom ; or how can he pray, and contribute to it of his temporal things as he ought ? It is impossible. If he ever had any interest in missions, or Sabbath schools, or education, or the Bible cause, or in the general revival of religion, it will die out, if he does not keep his eyes open to their operations. For a Christian to confine his periodical reading to a political, or business paper, is ruinous to all that is noble and Christian about him. Wherever you find one who does it, you will find a little contracted, covetous soul, opposed to all enterprise, and more concerned about the fate of his party, or the hobby of his paper, than about the honor of Christ or of his church. If we will have young converts grow up to spiritual manhood and usefulness, we must tear away their miserable papers, and put into their hands such as are religious. If any do not appreciate the importance of this, let them examine their own church, and see who is most active and useful, the most liberal, the most enterprising, who supports missions, Sabbath schools, educational interests, and all the institutions of religion, and they will find they are those who take a religious paper.

4. They should be *set at work in the best manner to promote their own spiritual improvement,*

and the welfare of others. An idle Christian, is a paradox. However soundly converted one may be, if he does not go about his Master's business, he will soon decline. It is emphatically true in this case, if one "will not work, neither shall he eat." And we fear many have fallen away because they were not properly advised in this respect.

Where they are heads of families, it is certainly proper to call their attention to the duty of family prayer, and urge them to it, if necessary. The duty and benefit of secret prayer, with the time and manner of its performance, should also be explained with great particularity. They should be introduced to a class, and placed under the watch care of a spiritual leader, immediately. This will secure them the benefit of the wisdom and experience of others, and give them an opportunity to express all their difficulties once a week, and have them solved. The advantage of this means of grace is incalculable. We never shall forget the useful lessons received from our first leader. They should also be introduced to the Sabbath school. No one is too old or too wise, to derive advantage from this source. Even under the most unfavorable circumstances it is beneficial. While to attend upon these exercises, keeps one from unprofitable intercourse with those who lounge about the church, in vain and idle conversation ; it is setting a good

example, and improving an exalted privilege. As a source of getting good, it is invaluable, and as a means of doing good, it, perhaps, exceeds all others teachers enjoy.

Young converts ought to be impressed, also, with their obligations to *support the gospel*. This matter is often postponed or neglected altogether, through fear of "driving them off;" but this is a great error. If they will not submit to be instructed on the subject now, while warm in their first love, they never will. And if they are determined to be covetous, and love the world more than God, or his cause, the sooner they are "driven off," the better. The church has covetous members enough already, and they are a great hindrance to the cause. We say, then, let young converts be thoroughly, but kindly instructed as to their duty in this respect. It will do them good, and not harm, and prepare them patiently to bear burdens, should they be called to it. Though they may be young and poor, it will do them good to pay a trifle, not only for preaching at home, but for all the benevolent institutions of the church. And if they are trained to do so, and God prospers them, when they have more means, they will have a heart in proportion. One reason why many rich men are so covetous, is, they were not taught to be liberal when they were poor.

Converts should be made to feel their obligations in regard to the *conversion of others*, in a particular manner, and to labor for it, to their utmost capacity. Persons at all familiar with the conversion of sinners, must have observed, that an intense desire for the salvation of others, is often one of the first indications of the change. It is an inseparable accompaniment of the work, though not always in the same degree, and ought to be cherished, and worked out in all appropriate ways, to secure its object. They should, therefore, be encouraged to personal conversation with their old friends and associates; and to public exhortation and prayer. This may be a heavy cross to them, and they may be able to do it only in a broken and feeble manner, and, perhaps, in a manner sometimes to excite derision and levity; but, we believe it is their duty. And much as some may affect to be disgusted with their weakness, it often does more good than the straight and stupid lectures of those who have less devotion to the work. Even those who laugh at their errors, feel the force of their words, broken as they are, and are constrained to acknowledge the genuineness of their experience.

But if it does *not* benefit others, it is of great service to themselves. Setting out with a pious and solemn determination to improve every oppor-

tunity by way of exhortation and prayer, to instruct, and warn their fellow-men to flee from the wrath to come, they naturally think and pray much about it. It also imposes the necessity of watchfulness upon them, that they may have confidence to look men in the face when they rise to exhort, and may not counteract their own efforts by inadvertencies, committed at other times.

It is said of certain reformed inebriates, that their appetite is so strong, the only way they can be kept from apostasy, is to keep them at work in the cause. Every effort being a virtual renewal of their pledge, and operating to occupy their minds, and impress them more deeply with the terrible evil to be avoided, they are preserved from falling. So it is with many young believers. Their habits have been such, and their propensities, and temptations to sin are so strong, they must be kept fully in the spirit and activity of the work, or they will be overcome. Others may maintain a pretty decent form, and pay a sort of popular respect to religion, though they lay down the cross and lose the spirit entirely. But they can be neither useful or happy, unless they enter with Christ into the great work of doing good, and saving sinners. This, we believe, to be indispensable to the maintenance of the spirit and power of religion.

CHAPTER XL

THE IMPORTANCE OF REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

FROM the facts developed in the preceding chapters, it can but appear, that the importance of revivals is not duly appreciated. To one, at all imbued with their spirit, this must be still more obvious from frequent observation. The indifference of persons who should feel the liveliest interest in them, speaks a language that cannot be mistaken. And yet, we are often pained to hear expressions on the subject, far more significant and direct. We propose therefore, to call attention to a few suggestions which illustrate their importance, and urge them on our confidence and esteem.

1. The first in order is, the tendency of Christians to backslide. If we consult history, it will appear that however marked the interposition of God for his people, or great the blessings bestowed, they have soon forgotten him, and turned from his commandments.

Thus saith the Lord, "O backsliding daughter, I will bring fear upon thee." "Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer." It was their instability which elicited the emphatic appeal, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." The whole history of this people is little more than a consecutive account of backslidings and recoveries.

If we come down to the gospel dispensation, the picture is not essentially relieved. In the apostolic age, there were sad declensions. Though revivals continued some time after, they grew less and less powerful, till overwhelmed by the dismal shades of the Dark Ages. The carnal slumbers of that long night were unbroken, till the voice of Luther was heard from Wittenberg, exposing the corruptions of the church, and calling for reform. This was the beginning of a new era. The excitement which succeeded, was powerful, and widespread; and led to reflection, faith, and reform. When the Wesleys and Whitefield awoke to the claims and privileges of the gospel, the church was in a low state. The new birth, though still retained in creeds and formularies, was a dead letter, and conversions were scarcely known; while drinking, gambling, cock-fighting, and every spe-

cies of popular vice, received the hearty patronage of the church, and even of the clergy.

It is well known that the puritans of New England were a noble class of Christians. Though not free from error, they regarded the new birth indispensable to salvation, and enjoyed many glorious revivals. But how soon did their gold become dim. Says Mr. Tracy, in speaking of the state of things at the commencement of the great revival under Edwards, Whitefield, and others: "Such had been the downward progress in New England. Revivals had become less frequent and powerful. There were many in the churches, and some even in the ministry, who were yet lingering among the supposed preliminaries to conversion. The difference between the church and the world was vanishing away. Church discipline was neglected, and the growing laxness of morals was invading the churches. And yet never, perhaps, had the expectation of reaching heaven at last, been more general, or more confident. The young were abandoning themselves to frivolity, and to amusements of dangerous tendency, and party spirit was producing its natural fruit of evil among the old."—*Great Awakening*, p. 8.

This representation, it must be remembered, is made by a minister of the church described, and is quite as favorable as the facts will justify. It is

obvious that genuine piety had become almost extinct when the revival commenced. But by the blessing of God upon the labors of the few who retained the Spirit, there was a wonderful excitement, which produced an entire revolution. Yet, in less than a half a century, we find the church fast asleep again, seeking the pleasures of the world, and conforming to its spirit and customs, with about as much avidity as infidels themselves.

Now, in view of these facts, what would have become of religion, and of the church on earth, had it not been for revivals? Had old Joshua, and David, and Josiah, and Ezra, clung to established customs, and opposed innovation, as some have, the name of God would hardly have been preserved from oblivion. Had the race been continued, we had been a universe of heathen.

The same tendency is observable in individuals, and particularly churches. How soon after a powerful revival do many Christians lay down the cross, and become stupid and inactive! And we know of nothing that will counteract this tendency, but a determined effort to keep up a revival. So long as Christians exert themselves to reach higher attainments in grace, and bring sinners to Christ, they will prosper; but when they cease these aggressive endeavors, and settle down in an idle,

or ceremonial profession, the mighty tide of human tendency will carry them away backward, in spite of all their good purposes.

Many churches have entirely run out, and others are hastening to the same issue, for the want of a revival. There are many, too, now in a flourishing condition, which had nearly expired, when a revival commenced, and re-established them in the grace of God. What would have become of them, but for that revival? Preacher dull and indifferent, church, in general, dead, congregation small, religion under great reproach, the community worldly, seeking the pleasures, honors, and emoluments of sin; breaking the Sabbath, and fortifying themselves in the various heresies of the day, they must have gone down. But by the blessing of God upon the pious endeavors of some faithful minister, or layman, they were roused to action in season to avert their doom.

2. The importance of revivals is manifest, also, from *the necessity of the sinner's conversion*. It is a settled point in theology, that the human soul is immortal. It must exist parallel with the Deity, in one of two conditions, viz.: heaven or hell, reward or punishment, peace or woe. Which, is to be determined by its moral character, formed in the present state; and the awards of distribu-

tive justice, to be assigned by the Judge of all, in the day of retribution.

Now, the Scriptures make it as certain as revelation can, that our conversion to God by repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is an indispensable pre-requisite to salvation. How could the great Teacher have been more explicit than he was to Nicodemus? His unvarying declaration is, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." When Nicodemus questioned him further, he explained, by saying, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And to make the matter still more explicit, he intimates that the birth is a spiritual birth, or regeneration, the fact of which may be experienced and enjoyed, while the process of its accomplishment is concealed. He taught the same doctrine to his disciples. They were questioning who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He entered not at all into their speculations, but setting a little child before them, declared most emphatically, "Except ye be *converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." He then administered them a series of instructions and precautions; warning them to abandon an offending eye, or foot, or hand, because it is better to enter into life *halt*

or maimed, "rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into *everlasting fire*;" thus, making the attainment of heaven dependent on conversion, and subsequent adhesion to his will.

In allusion to the same great change, he declares, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now, the Pharisees here alluded to, were the *strictest* of all sects. It was to this class Saul of Tarsus belonged. They were a prayerful, ceremonial, conscientious, and devoted people. If they did wrong, it was through ignorance, as Saul persecuted the followers of Christ. He "verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." But good as they were, they were unfit for heaven, because not converted. We say, then, without multiplying arguments, unless sinners are converted, they must perish. "He that believeth not, shall be damned." "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." O, how important is the sinner's conversion! Immortal purity and pleasure depend upon it. Communion with God in glory, the companionship of

angels, and of saints and martyrs, who burn before the throne, are beatitudes that can never be enjoyed without it. An unconverted soul in heaven would be miserable. To behold an offended God, and a crucified Jesus, whom he has despised and rejected without cause; to see the saints in glory, with all tears wiped from their eyes, beyond the reach of sorrow and sighing, fully and eternally saved; to hear celestial melodies pour from innumerable hearts, completely and for ever happy, and to see heaven in its purity and glory, in contrast with his own guilt and corruption, would render heaven to the sinner,

"The hottest part of hell."

But the Judge of all has declared he cannot enter there. No, never! He is not only unfit for it, but the decree of Almighty God is against him.

Had not the sinner's conversion been a work of unutterable magnitude, would God have given his Son to suffer and die for him? Would Jesus have consented to such a life and death, for an object less momentous? "I came," said he, "to call sinners to repentance." Would he have commissioned men, and sent them forth, "as sheep among wolves," to experience the terrible fortune of martyrs, were conversion a matter of ordinary significance, or necessity? O, no! He knew the

value of a soul. He could rightly estimate the pleasures of heaven, and the pains of hell.

We talk of the greatness of human projects, with wonder and amazement. Railroad locomotion, and telegraphic despatches, are lauded as the most important discoveries. We are astounded at the extraordinary schemes and developments of each month, and the world is summoned to renewed wonder and admiration. But we have yet to learn that God, or one of his glorious retinue, regard these achievements of any importance whatever. But we do know, the repentance of a sinner, is with them a matter of thrilling interest. Occupied as they may be with the magnificence peculiar to their delightful abode, and ravished with perpetual ecstasies as they are, the conversion of one sinner is of sufficient magnitude to attract their attention, and increase their raptures. Small and unworthy as it may seem to inconsiderate, and conceited men, who estimate things by the arithmetic of this world, in their esteem, it is of infinite moment. They see in it another "brand plucked out of the fire," another sinner rescued from destruction, to join in the general anthem to God and the Lamb. They see its mighty results stretching out into the immeasurable ages of eternity, and bend over the redeemed sinner as an heir of immortal bliss.

But in a revival of religion, there is not one sinner converted, but many. The Spirit is poured out upon a whole town or neighborhood, and multitudes inquire "what shall we do to be saved." In a few brief days the whole aspect of community is changed. The inebriate forsakes his cups. The gambler casts his cards and billiards to the flames. The votary of social pleasure withdraws himself from theatrical exhibitions, and the festivities of the ball-room. The Sabbath breaker goes up to the house of God. The tipler becomes serious. The worldling awakes to the folly of ambition; and a religious gravity, becoming candidates for eternity, settles down upon many minds, long enslaved to frivolity. Now, the place of prayer is the common resort. Broken down family altars are repaired, and new ones erected. The scriptures are read with avidity, and religious conversation is heard in every direction. Here a publican cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." There, an undeceived Pharisee, broken down under an awful sense of guilt, inquires, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" By his side, a penitent exclaims, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The language of others is, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." Under these exciting circum-

stances, many reform and embrace the cross. Old prejudices are overcome, quarrels are adjusted, and enemies in sin, become friends and brothers in Christ. Thus the work spreads, till hundreds are regenerated by the power of God, and numbered with the heirs of salvation. O, if "there is joy in heaven over *one* sinner that repenteth," what must be the transport occasioned by a revival?

8. The importance of revivals may be seen farther, by considering the *improbability of backslidden churches being recovered, or sinners converted without them*. And here we have need to advert to history. When was an apostate church known to arouse gradually, by unexciting means? Never! All history shows that reformations of this kind have uniformly been precipitate, and general. Thus it was with God's peculiar people, they sunk and rose in masses. Their revivals were national, as well as individual. The whole nation repented at once.

And has not this been the general course of events in other churches? Have not all great spiritual improvements taken place, rather through occasional excitements, than by gradual advancement, under ordinary means? No one will deny this. To look for these results, therefore, in any other way, would be to expect the Divine Being to change his established mode of operation. They have uniformly occurred under powerful excite-

ments, and, as a "rushing mighty wind," and this method is no less philosophical than general. Revivals of religion, are, therefore, just as important, as it is to save the church from entire and unceasing apostasy.

But how is it with the conversion of sinners? It cannot be denied that under the ordinary influences and excitements of the church, one is occasionally converted. Instances of special faithfulness on the part of some Christian, or a severe and sudden stroke of Providence, occasionally arouses a sinner, and leads him to repentance. But to rely entirely on this process of converting men, is to abandon the race to destruction. The great end cannot be gained without a general and extraordinary excitement. The public mind must be arrested and directed to Christ, and religion become the all-absorbing topic, or, such are the prejudices of sinners on the one hand, and attachments on the other, they will not repent.

Besides, there are influences growing out of association, and common pursuit, which bind men together, so that they restrain each other from right actions, and lead on to multiplied transgressions. Says Dr. Barnes, "One sin is interlocked with others, and is sustained by others. This is especially the case when the world becomes gay and

giddy ; when the ordinary means of grace fail to make an impression ; when luxury spreads its temptations over a community ; when the public mind becomes intent on gain ; when political strife rages throughout a community ; or when some bold and daring allurements of vice engrosses the public mind, and the laws of God and man are alike set at defiance. Rarely is it the case that one form of iniquity stands by itself ; it is interlocked with others. Such combinations of evil can be met only by the power that goes forth in a revival of religion. To meet it and overcome it, is beyond the power of man, and beyond the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God. The only resource of the church, then, is in the right arm of the Most High.

“ The gospel of Christ is fitted to meet all these combined evils, and convert the gay and thoughtless multitudes to God. But it is the gospel only when it puts forth its most mighty energies. It is the power of God evinced when the church is aroused, and when combined efforts to save souls are opposed to combined energies of evil ; when the church rises in its strength, and with one voice calls upon God, and with one heart engages in the work of the salvation of men. There are evils of alliance and confederation which can never be met but by a general revival of religion. There are evils in all our churches which can never be removed but by

such a work of grace. There are thousands of the young of both sexes to whom we have no access, and who can never be reached, but by the Spirit of God descending on them with Almighty power — a power that goes forth only when the church is greatly impressed with a sense of existing evils, and when it comes with fervent entreaty to a throne of grace to ask the interposition of the Almighty arm. One form of sin is interwoven with another; one countenances another; one leads on another; and all stand opposed with solid front to the gospel of Christ.”

Had God organized society differently, and bound men together by no common sympathies, the case would have been different. Each would then have lived and died for himself alone, and revivals been equally unnecessary and impossible. As each in that case would have sinned independently of others, so he must repent, and could do no otherwise. But, in the language of the author just quoted, “He has made the race one great brotherhood, broken up into communities of nations, tribes, clans, families — each with its own set of sympathies, with peculiar interests, with peculiar sorrows and joys.

“Now, there was no way conceivable in which just sentiments and feelings could be so rapidly spread as by this very organization. We appeal,

then, to this organization, and maintain that the way to propagate and secure just sentiments in a community, is to appeal to common sympathy and common feelings. [This is the way we do in worldly matters.] Thought rouses thought, and mind acts on mind, and truth presses on truth, till a country is aroused and its great interests are safe. In time of danger, I see men with common feelings rush to the standard of freedom. The plough is left in the furrow ; and the counting-house is forsaken ; and the ship is moored to the wharf ; and the tools of the mechanic are dropped ; and the places of amusement are closed ; and home is abandoned ; and the hold on gold is loosed ; and the men of affluence seize the sword ; and the earth trembles under the mighty tread of advancing legions.

“ I know the objection that is brought against revivals, that they are the work of sympathy alone. But I am yet to understand why religion is to spread through the world by denying it the aid of the social sympathies, and of those tender feelings which facilitate the propagation of our just opinions and feelings. I am yet to learn, when the flame of patriotism is made to burn more pure and bright by appealing to all that is tender and sympathetic in our nature, why religion is to be regarded as suspicious and tarnished because the pleadings of a father or mother, or the tears of a sister, have

been the occasion, though amidst deep excitement, of directing the thoughts to eternity. To me it seems there is a peculiar loveliness in the spread of religion in this way, and I love to contemplate Christianity calling to its aid whatever of tenderness, kindness, and love, there may be existing in the bosom of falling and erring man. These sympathies are the precious remains of the joys of paradise lost; they may be made invaluable aids in the work of securing paradise again."

We say, then, because community is thus sympathetically interlinked, and, therefore, goes in masses, whether for good or ill, we have not the least reason to expect sinners to be converted in any considerable numbers, without a mighty movement, which shall lead them simultaneously to Christ, as is done in revivals. Most sinners will never be converted except under these circumstances. So strong is their adhesion to this world, so averse are they to the reproaches of Christ, and so entangled with irreligious associates, they never will turn to God, unless the foundations of society are shaken, and its hold upon them is relaxed.

4. Revivals of religion are necessary, also, to *the triumph of moral reforms*. There are many who will maintain what is called a good moral character, without religion. They take an interest in the reformatory movements of the day. But others,

of different temperament and training, need to be brought under powerful religious influence. Such are their habits of profanity, licentiousness, intemperance, fraud, Sabbath-breaking, or sinful amusement, nothing short of a profound sense of religious obligation, and a thorough baptism of the grace of God can recover them. An occasional conviction of the sinfulness of their course is not sufficient. Nor is the frequent experience of the bitter fruits of it. Their resolutions to reform, solemnly and sincerely made, and ratified by oath, are no more than the spider's web before the mighty rush of their excited passions. The things they see to be right, they do not; and the things they would not, these they do. They are under the dominion of sin—"carried captive by the devil at his will." Often have we heard them say, "It is in vain to try, I cannot reform. I have resolved, and vowed, resolved and vowed again, signed the pledge, and after all, gone on as before. I would try again but it is of no use. My doom is fixed! I am a ruined man!"

Now, what is the hope of persons thus allied and enslaved to sin? To vow reform, does not eradicate their appetite. They love their favorite sin well afterward, as before. Nor does it enfeeble their passions. These rage and burn with as much intensity as ever. But the religion of Christ

renovates the *heart*, it destroys the power of sin over it, turns the captivity of the poor slave to passion, and makes him a new creature. The things he once loved, now he hates, and those he hated, he now loves. The fountain itself is purified. The "old man is crucified with his evil deeds." "The law of the Spirit of life makes him free from the law of sin and death." Grace disenthral his wasted spirit, and strengthens him for the race of immortality.

Sinners often misapprehend the grace of God. Instead of coming to Christ to be renewed and made holy, they imagine they must make themselves holy, that they may be accepted *when* they come. Hence many, knowing their own weakness, never make the attempt; and others who do, give it up in despair. Said an intelligent business man to the writer, "There is no use for me to try to be a Christian. I have many men of the worst kind under my charge, and am in the bad habit of profanity when they vex me. Now, if I were to seek religion, it would not be a week before I should forget myself, and fall into my old way again, and then what would be said?" He was reminded that religion would destroy this wretched propensity. Not long after, he became a good man. Subsequently, being at his place of business, we asked him whether he had sworn at his

men since making a profession. "Well, there," said he, "surprising as it may seem, I have not once thought of it. Though they have conducted worse than ever, perhaps, it has not even entered into my mind."

The same has occurred in regard to persons of intemperate habits. After trying every way to reform, without invoking divine assistance, and utterly failing of success, they have been induced to come to Christ, as their only hope; and are living witnesses to-day, that their appetite was not only checked, but destroyed, so that they have no more taste for alcohol, than for the water of the ocean. This is the uniform effect of experimental religion in regard to all the vices.

"Earth hath no sickness
That heaven cannot cure."

Now, as revivals of religion give vigor and extension to such experience, they are promotive of the great reforms of the age. And, besides, as before intimated, they reform cases which have baffled all other influences—cases which have been accounted incurable. We never knew of a revival of any great extent and power, in which some of its subjects were not of this character. They seem to have been impressed, that the throne of grace was their only hope. We have heard them avow it, again and again, as they threw

themselves at the feet of Christ, and prayed for mercy. Besides, it may be remarked, nearly every case of repentance and restitution in regard to fraud and oppression, that has come to our knowledge, resulted from a revival.

But revivals of religion contribute to this object beyond the individual cases to which we have adverted. Many, who do not entirely submit to their influence, are greatly modified. They hear the word with more attention and candor, and form purposes of partial amendment. A correct public conscience is created, on great moral questions; and the way prepared for sowing the seeds of knowledge and reproof concerning them. Let religious principle, and feeling, lose their hold upon the public mind, and the march of reform is backward. The noisy boast of some men about the magnanimity of human nature, is flagrant folly. Human nature, in its lapsed condition, is corrupt and carnal. It is influenced vastly more by the *consequences* of vice, than by the *wrong* of it; by the terrors of death and hell, than the holiness of heaven. God's medium of reform, is the *conscience*, and not human excellence. This is to be enlightened and quickened by the law of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Without these appliances in their reviving and illumi-

nating efficiency, reform must be limited and unsound.

This explains why infidel reformers, who have taken it upon them to glorify human nature, and ridicule religion, have been able to register some cases of reformation. On their particular theme, they have spoken truth, but they have spoken it to ears and hearts which were prepared for their message under the tuition and moulding of religious instructions. Let them succeed in making their profligate hearers as infidel as they assume to be, and they might as well pour their eloquence into the ears of death. It would be like the falling of sparks into the ocean. But for humanity's sake we pray they may not.

5. We remark, finally, revivals are indispensable to the *maintenance of sound doctrine*. The inclination of the human mind to heresy, is proverbial. In writing to Timothy, St. Paul exhorted, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." And again, "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith,

giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

How fully this prophesy has been fulfilled, may be seen by reference to the history of the church from the apostolic age to the present time. But our business is with the relation of doctrinal alienations to revivals of religion.

If we turn back to the revivals which occurred under the Mosaic dispensation, it will be seen that however short the intervals between them, they all found the people deeply sunk in heathenism. They had abandoned the doctrines inculcated by Abraham, and Moses, and David, and the prophets, and had adopted those of the nations around them, as being more congenial with the inclinations of their perverted hearts. Hence, the first thing they had to do in a revival was, to open and cleanse the neglected house of God. Then, they cut down the groves, and purged the high places, and overthrew and demolished their idols, and brake down the altars of Baalim, and returned to the oracles of truth. Thus, it was by means of revivals, that the truth was preserved.

Jerusalem was full of heresy, when that great awakening took place on the day of Pentecost. Christ had taken occasion to warn his disciples against it. But when the word was spoken with

power, and fear came down on every soul, many received the truth gladly, and submitted to its authority. Thus being made to love God and his truth, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The same may be said of nearly all the revivals which have occurred since. They reformed the *doctrine* of the people, as well as their *hearts*. Look at the revival under Luther. This brought out and gave publicity to many glorious truths, which had been concealed for ages, particularly justification by faith. And what a mighty strife was there in the great Wesleyan revival in defence of essential principles? Though the formularies of the church continued to hold forth sound doctrine, the ministry, to a great extent, had lost it, and fallen into gross errors. This blessed work sent an earthquake among the musty volumes of the fathers, and brought out great masses of pure gold, which had been coined in other days of revival, and forgotten in the general apostasy.

Observe it where we will, every decline in piety is followed by a decline in doctrine. It is natural for men to hold sentiments which justify their conduct. Let one become an infidel in practice, and in nine cases out of ten he will assume to be one in doctrine. Bring a sinner, trained under the

light of the gospel, to right action, and you bring him right in sentiment. That is, in all essential particulars. Thus, Saul of Tarsus was no sooner humbled, than he gave Christ his proper title. The fact that he had regarded him as an impostor, did not stand in his way for a moment. The jailer, too, being awakened, regarded Paul and Silas as God's ministers, and adopted them as his spiritual guides in the infinite concerns of eternity. The fact is, there is an influence connected with the spiritual and providential operations of a revival, that carries the truth home to every sinner's heart.

Other aspects of this subject might be presented, but our limits will not allow of it. The utility of revivals to families and individuals, nearly ruined by gross and corrupting sin, would furnish an interesting chapter of itself. Their hallowing influence on society in general, is remarkable. Where they occur most frequently, there industry, honesty, peace, domestic order, social sympathy, education, temporal prosperity, and personal security, are seen in their greatest luxuriance. For an illustration of this remark, compare our country with Mexico, France, Germany, Italy, or even with England. Contrast our missionary stations, wherein have been glorious revivals, with other portions of the same

countries. How striking the difference! Mr. Finney remarks very justly, "Almost all the religion in the world has been produced by revivals." May we not add, and almost every other moral and social blessing? When the missionaries commenced their labors in the Pacific Islands, the population was rapidly decreasing. Vice had reached such a prodigious growth, that society was wasting under its influence. But the revival turned the tide of affairs, and placed that degraded people in circumstances of peace and prosperity.

In conclusion, dear reader, permit a word of exhortation. Are you a professed Christian? Remember, you are yet on the battle field. The victory is not won, nor the fight over. Temptations and conflicts await you. It is through "tribulation deep," that you are to enter glory. O, arm yourself with all the armor of God! Put on the whole panoply of the gospel, that no weapon formed against you may prosper. "The breastplate of *faith* and *love*," with "the *hope* of salvation," will be indispensable to sustain you in the trials and duties of the Christian life. Let religion be your theme. Carry it with you into every department of duty, that it may keep you. Be bold and courageous, yet always courteous and kind. This will secure triumph in every conflict, render your calling and election sure.

But you must not live for yourself alone. God has placed you in circumstances where you cannot be neutral. Take what course you may, it will exert a positive influence upon the destiny of all around you. Your pretensions are remembered; they are compared with your actual deportment, and will tell on the beholder for weal or woe. O, if you will not contribute to the ruin of undying souls, take care of your example, and your heart! To be thoroughly moral is not enough. Nor, to be formally religious. You must have "the power" — be a burning and shining light. You must be *happy*. It is as much your duty to be happy, as to watch or pray. And your happiness has much to do with the conversion of others. They look to see what Christ does for you — to see whether you have "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, patience," — whether you are *happy*. Happiness is the boon for which all pant, the prize for which they run. Let them see you "rejoicing in God with joy unspeakable and full of glory," and know that your cup is full of pleasure, and running over, and, O, how it will dissatisfy them with their own condition! They will be induced to come and "taste that the Lord is good."

But more than this, you are to have a profound sympathy for sinners, that they may be converted.

The heart that is right with God will feel this in some degree, but it should be cherished and strengthened, till it rises above all other emotions, and draws out the soul in most fervent prayer. Without something of this, you will accomplish little. If your religious movements are not dull and cold, they will at least be foreign to the sinner's real wants. They will not come home to his conscience. Perhaps you are a parent, and have children living "without God and without hope in the world." What are you doing to save them? Do you conduct before them as you would that others should do? Do you yearn over them as did Christ over Jerusalem? Do you take as much pains to save them, as to dress, and present them to good advantage before the world? Remember, every thing depends on you. Their souls are in your hands. O, watch to save them, and never rest till you see them converted, and happy in Christ!

You may be a wife. The influences surrounding your companion are such, you may be unable to bring him to repentance without a revival. The next work of the kind may unite him to you in the bonds of Christian fellowship. Don't forget

When invited to attend a prayer or protracting, or to engage in any special effort for
do not imagine you have no interest at

stake. Unless there is a revival soon, that husband may perish forever. Death may have marked him for an early exit, and there is little hope of his conversion without a revival. Such is his pride, or connection with the world, deeply as he may be impressed he will shrink from the cross, unless there should be great excitement, and general attention to the subject.

Whatever your relations, there are those around you to whom your heart cleaves with peculiar affection. You desire their salvation. Considering how few attend to the subject under ordinary circumstances, you can have little encouragement about them without a revival. Pray then with all your might for the pouring out of the Spirit. Throw your whole soul into the enterprise. Consult with your brethren, strengthen their faith, hold up their hands, and urge them up to mighty and united exertion. Throw your arms around the sinner, any one, no matter who, and get the ice broken as soon as possible. If any complain that you are trying to "get up a revival," refer them to Nehemiah, and to the apostles. Don't be hindered by any such reflections. There have always been idlers in the vineyard, who will neither work themselves, nor suffer others. Let them prate on. But in the name of Christ, as you love

precious souls, labor for a revival, and faint not.

If you are a Christian, you love God, and wish to see all bow to his sceptre. You love his truth, and rejoice in its diffusion and triumph. The Bible and missionary enterprises are dear to you. And the great reforms of the day have your good wishes, and best endeavors. Remember, I beseech you, how dependent these interests are on the revival of God's work. The decline of grace in the heart, is the certain precursor of decline in every good cause. It is a revival of religion, that sends new life and vigor into every vein and artery of our benevolent system. This is the genial sun and fertilizing rain that strengthen, and mature every germ of Christian enterprise. O, then, as you pray for the establishment of equity, for the abolition of war and oppression, for the universal spread of the gospel in its purity and power, labor for a revival. This is the lever by which we may move the world — the light to dissipate its darkness.

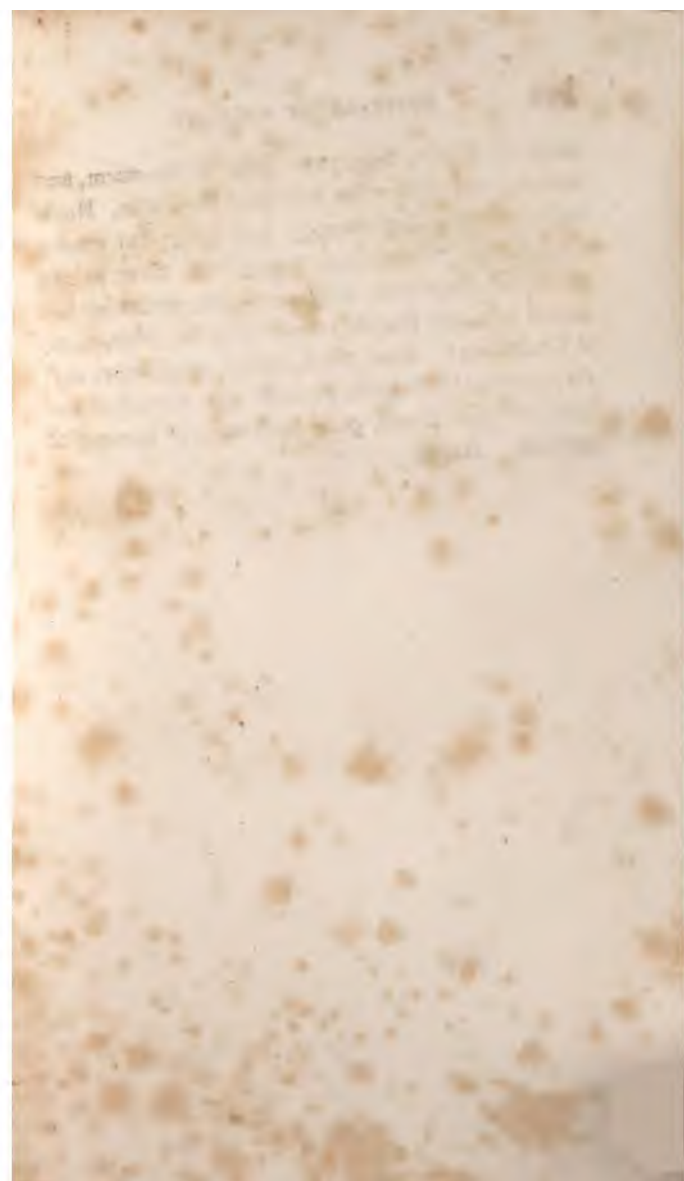
Think of what revivals have done ; of the blind, they have made to see ; of the deaf, they have made to hear ; of the dead in trespasses and sins, they have raised ; of the lost, they have found ; of the sick, they have healed ; of the poor, they have enriched ; of the miserable, and wretched, and despised, they have relieved, made happy, and glorified. Where had you been to-day but for their

occurrence? And where that beloved daughter, or son, or other friend? Consider how much you are indebted to them for all you are, or hope to be. For the enjoyments of this world, for the pleasures of life, for domestic happiness, for social intercourse, for the peace of God, for the comforts of the Holy Ghost, for the prospect of heaven! All these flow from this one living fountain.

I intreat you, then, dear reader, work for God, and the salvation of souls. Sacrifice, give your influence, your talents, your time as far as practicable, your all. Give your money to support the *most useful* ministers; to build churches for the *people*; to educate pious young men for the altar; to put the Bible into every family on earth; to circulate stirring tracts; and for all other useful purposes. Resolve that you will act some good part in the mighty struggle. By that you will not only be religious, but entirely so. That you will give your money and influence, where they will accomplish *most for the people* — for their conversion, and eternal felicity.

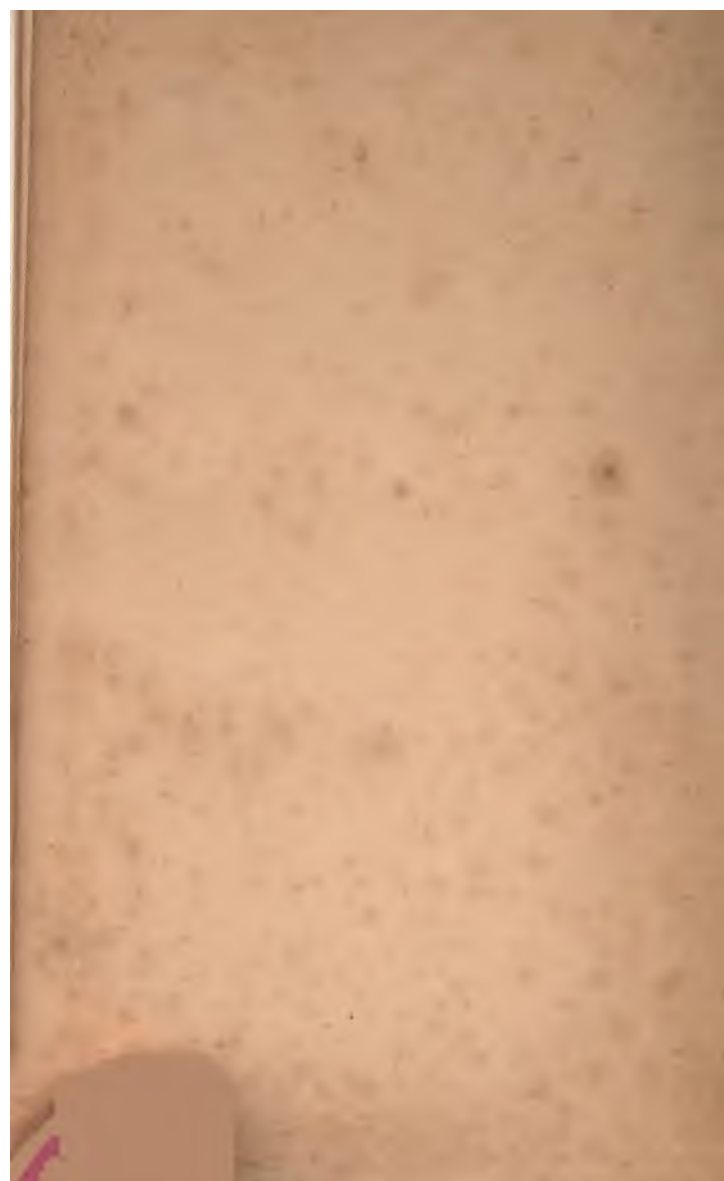
In a word never consent to be a mere nominal professor — to hang upon the church of Christ as an incubus. Never! Better that a millstone were hanged about your neck and you drowned in the depths of the sea. If you are a child of God, honor your Father, and don't curse the whole family. Shoulder the

cross of Christ, bare your head to the storm, and throw yourself into the hottest of the battle. Nothing is wanting but courage and enterprise among Christians. There are enough of them in the world, if they were only alive and active in the cause, to shake the universe. To your posts, then, O Christians! *Live, teach, exhort, pray, give, suffer, agonize!* Let the revival and spread of religion be your *theme, your burden, your successful business.* AMEN.



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